THE EVERGETINOS

A Complete Text

CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST
ORTHODOX STUDIES

THE EVERGETINOS

«Τίς φθονερώτερος τοῦ κεκτημένου βιβλίον ὠφέλιμον, καὶ
μὴ μεταδιδόντος τῷ ἀδελφῷ πρὸς οἰκοδομήν;»

τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἐφραίμ

THE EVERGETINOS

A COMPLETE TEXT
Book II

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Dedication

For Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,
our ever-present guide in the desert and
our intercessory Abba in the City.

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«Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεόν, ἀγγελικὸν βίον βιοῖ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς νηστεύων καὶ ἀγρυπνῶν, καὶ ψάλλων καὶ προσευχόμενος, καὶ περὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀεὶ καλὰ λογιζόμενος».

τοῦ Ἁγίου Μαξίμου

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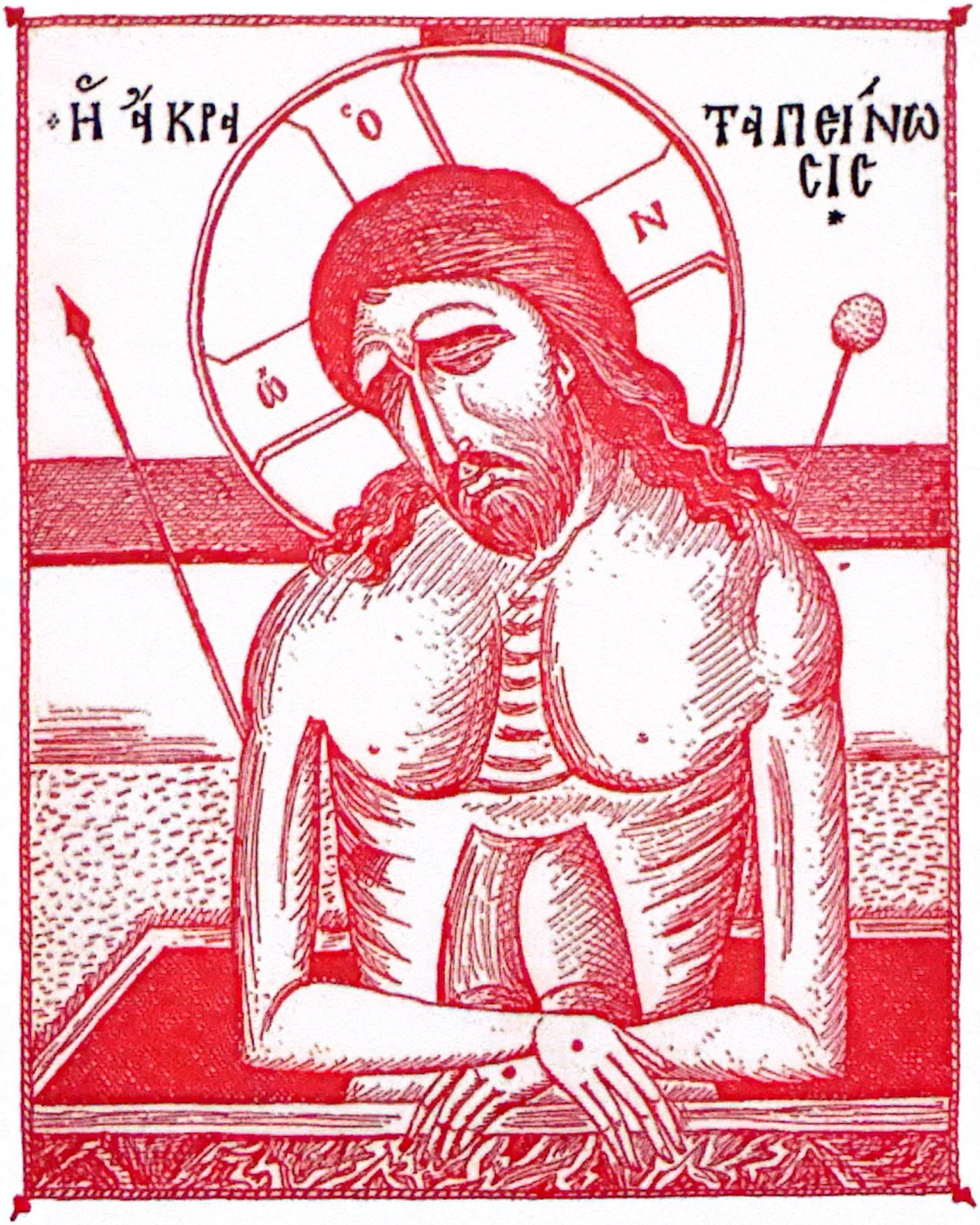


Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:5–8

Therefore, just as the first rung of the ladder is withdrawal from the world, so separation from evil is the beginning of progress in the Godly life. [In the printed Greek text, this is attributed to "Justin on Psalm 1"; it is actually from St. Basil the Great.]

Hypothesis I

That those who abase themselves are held in honor by God.

A. From St. Palladios

In Tabenne* there is a women's monastery with about four hundred nuns, opposite the men's monastery. In it there lived a virgin named Isidora, who feigned foolishness for Christ's sake, humbling and abasing herself. All of the sisters detested her so much that they would not even eat with her; but she accepted this joyfully.

Her virtue, then, was very beneficial for the entire convent, for she fulfilled all of her duties, was obedient to everyone as though she were a servant, and attended to each nun in her every need and with kindness. For the sisterhood, she was the sponge that cleaned everything (that is, just as a sponge cleans every unclean thing, so she did every lowly task); as the Lord said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant" (St. Matthew 20:26-27) and "If any man among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool" (I Corinthians 3:18).

All the other nuns had been tonsured and wore monastic veils, while Isidora performed all of her tasks in the convent wearing a rag that she tied around her head. None of the four hundred nuns ever saw her eating or taking a morsel of bread; rather, after gathering the crumbs from the tables and cleaning out the leftover food from the cooking pots, she was content with such. She never wore shoes, never insulted anyone, and never complained; nor did she ever utter an abusive or haughty word, although she was insulted and beaten, was frequently the object of curses, and was loathed by most of the nuns.

Now, with regard to the most holy Isidora, an Angel of the Lord appeared to the holy Piteroun, who was a virtuous and most experienced anchorite, and said to him: "Why do you have such a high opinion of your accomplishments: that you are devout and that you remain in this place? Do you wish to see a woman more devout than yourself? Go to the convent in Tabenne, and there you will find a nun with a crown on her head; she is better than you. For, though she serves such a large number of nuns and attends to each one of them according to her different needs, nonetheless she never permits her mind to wander away

from God, even though everyone abuses her. But you sit here, imagining in your mind what various cities are like, even though you have never seen the world."

Immediately, Piteroun the Great got up and went to Tabenne, where he asked the spiritual Teachers to take him to the convent. Since he was respected by the Fathers and they trusted him, and since he had grown old in the ascetic life, they took him to the other side of the river and led him to the convent. And having given the customary greetings, he asked to see all of the nuns, one by one.

When they had all come, the one he was seeking was not there. The great Saint said, "Bring all of the sisters before me." They answered, "We are all here." "Yes, but there is still one missing," the Saint insisted, "the one whom the Angel showed me." Then they said, "We have another one in the kitchen, but she is a bit simple." The great Saint said, "Bring her to me. Let me see her." However, Isidora would not comply, evidently understanding the reason she was being summoned (indeed, perhaps God revealed this to her). So, they dragged her by force, and as they were bringing her, they told her, "The holy Piteroun wants to see you" (for he was famous).

As soon as they brought her in, the great Saint examined her face, as well as the rag that she had tied around her head and over her forehead. And falling at her feet, he said: "Holy Mother, bless me." She then fell at his feet and said, "Bless me, Father, my master."

As soon as the others saw all of this, they became upset and said, "Do not humiliate yourself, Abba, for she is a 'half-wit.'" And so the Saint said to all of them: "You are ignorant. She is better than you and better than I; she is an Amma, that is, a spiritual Mother. And may God make me worthy to be with her on the Day of Judgment."

No sooner did the nuns hear this, than they began to confess, each one, the various ways in which they had caused sorrow to befall that holy woman. One said that she had scoffed at her. Another had mocked her for her humble demeanor. Yet another admitted, "I used to dump the slop from plates on her." Another, "I injured her." Another, "I struck her"; another, "I often whacked her in the nose." And in general, all of them made reference to their various attacks on her. Hearing all of their confessions and having offered prayers for them, together with the holy Isidora, St. Piteroun departed, asking this esteemed servant of God to pray for him.

After a few days, this precious holy woman, so esteemed by God, secretly fled the convent, since they had all come to regard her highly and

to treat her kindly, and she could not accept such honors or the apologies of the sisterhood for their past actions. It was never learned where she went, where she hid away, or where she died.

B. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

St. Equitius, who was made worthy to receive many spiritual gifts from God and who by his teaching and preaching led many souls to the Lord, in accordance with the commandment given, wore such extremely shabby clothes that those who exchanged the monastic kiss in greeting him were often repulsed. When he had occasion to go somewhere, it was his custom to ride the worst horse that the monastery had. He would use a halter instead of a bridle and bit, and a sheepskin instead of a saddle. He always took with him a leather saddlebag with holy books, and wherever he went, he would uncap the spring of Holy Writ and water the soil of spiritual thoughts.

Now, his reputation spread as far as Rome. Out of envy, various people said many bad things about him to the Patriarch; of so much did they accuse him, that finally they persuaded the Patriarch to send his inspector general, Julian, to summon the Saint before him. The inspector went immediately to Equitius's monastery, where he found the more eminent monastics having a discussion. He asked them where he would find the Abbot, and they answered that he was in the hollow just below, where he was cutting weeds.

Thereupon, the inspector sent his assistant, a pompous and arrogant fellow, to call the Saint. The assistant, approaching the mowers, asked them to tell him who Equitius was. However, the moment that he was informed by them who the Saint was, he began to tremble and was in such agony that he could hardly walk. Approaching the Saint, he fell at his feet and told him that his master was at the monastery.

Without losing any time, the man of God put on his outer cloak, put his scythe over his shoulder, and returned to the monastery.

Julian, learning from his assistant that this was Equitius, felt revulsion and had serious misgivings about speaking with him. When he nonetheless approached him, Julian was overcome by an indescribable fear, and only with difficulty, trembling, could he tell him why he had come. Humbled in this way, Julian knelt before the Saint and asked him to bless him. The Saint, having lifted him up, blessed him and asked that they go immediately to the Patriarch. "For," Equitius said, "if we do not obey today, tomorrow it will be impossible." But Julian answered

him, "Father, I am exhausted from the journey, and I cannot go back today." Obliged by the inspector, they remained that night together at the monastery.

The next day, just as day dawned, one of the Patriarch's assistants came to Julian and ordered him not to dare to remove the servant of God from his monastery. Inquiring from the assistant about the reason for this reversal, he answered that the previous night the Patriarch had been terrified by a Divine vision, since he had dared to send (a man) to summon and to bring before him the servant of God Equitius. Immediately, then, Julian arose and went to tell Equitius: "Our Father, the Patriarch, bids that you need not expend the effort (to go to see him)." Whereupon Equitius, very saddened, said to him: "Did I not tell you, yesterday, that if we did not leave immediately, we would not be able to fulfill the order afterwards?" Having thus accommodated Julian at the monastery with love, the Saint also gave him a small gratuity for his efforts (even though Julian did not want to accept it) and, wishing him a good trip, blessed him.

Learn then, Peter, how honored are those who prefer, in the present life, to be loathed by others; namely, they are numbered among the citizens of the heavenly homeland. On the contrary, those who in their arrogance appear to be righteous before men and are puffed up in their vanity—such are found far from the eyes of God. For this reason, Christ censures them and says: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men" (St. Luke 16:15), and so on.

C. From the Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker

Once, all of the inhabitants in and around the city of Komana** set off and went to meet Gregory the Wonderworker; they requested that he go to visit their city and there to strengthen the Church by ordaining a Priest for them. St. Gregory of course agreed, and went to them. The city leaders turned for candidates to those whom they considered superior in education and lineage, and thus of social worth; so, the votes for candidates were distributed among many nominees, since one preferred this one, and another yet someone else.

St. Gregory, however, waited for some counsel from God on the matter. And just as Samuel, as it is related in Holy Scripture, when he was to anoint a king for the Jews, was not impressed by beauty and physical stature, but sought after royalty of soul—even if it was to be found in a man of lowly status—so it was with the Saint. Looking carefully at

the attributes of each one of those who had been put forth as a candidate, he looked for one thing only: if one of those nominated, even before being ordained a Priest, had taken into his soul the Grace of the Priesthood through the devout nature of his life and his virtuous conduct.

Now, when the leaders presented, with laudations, those whom they had nominated to be Priests, St. Gregory ordered them to look, as well, into the lives of the humblest citizens of the city, since—as he said—it might be possible to find among *these* citizens someone who was worthier, in richness of soul, than those whom they considered important. One of the leaders in attendance interpreted St. Gregory the Great's judgment to be defiant and an affront to their decision; that is, he assumed that the Saint had chosen to accept no one from among those whom they had selected for their education, their rank, and their status in life, but to give preference, for the Grace of the Priesthood, to other uneducated and brutish people. And scoffing at the Saint, he added: "If that is what you order, then let us ignore those whom the entire city has nominated and raise to the rank of the Priesthood some brute from the rabble. It is time, then, to call Alexander the coal peddler to the Priesthood; and if you think it good, let us vote unanimously for him, so that the whole city can be in concord with us."

Such were the things that he said, casting aspersions on the Saint with his sarcastic proposal, on account of the Saint's aforementioned, ostensibly witless words. There took birth in the mind of the Saint, however, the idea that, from all that was said, perhaps the name of Alexander was mentioned among the candidates for the Priesthood by Divine inspiration. "And who," he asked those in attendance, "is this Alexander, that you should now bring him up?"

Thereupon, one of those present, laughing with derision, brought in their midst Alexander, who was wearing sorry-looking rags that did not even cover his whole body; his appearance gave evidence of his profession. His hands and his face, as well as the remainder of his body, which the rags did not cover, were covered with grime. The sight of one such as Alexander, standing among them, gave all of the others an occasion to laugh. Through the clairvoyant eyes of St. Gregory, however, what was happening created surprise and amazement in his soul.

This man, so poor and so unkempt in body, was self-composed and seemed to be rejoicing at all that which to his ignorant detractors was laughable. And it was so. He was not reduced to this kind of life by poverty, but was a philosopher, as his subsequent life story proved,

since he became a Martyr and came to the end of his earthly sojourn by fire. He sought to live without ostentation, whereas he was more noble than others in their feigned importance. And since he would not exchange anything for the higher and true life, which he desired, he tried in every way to avoid the attention of men, so as to attain his aim of virtue.

Since, then, he had such a loftiness of mind, he concealed himself behind the most humble of occupations, just as he wore an ugly mask, even though he was in the flower of his youth. He thought it dangerous to his goal of acquiring wisdom to display the comeliness of his body; for he knew that such a thing had been the cause of many serious falls. So as not to suffer something undesirable and to become the source of passions in the eyes of others, he employed, as a kind of ugly mask, the profession of a coal peddler; in this way, he trained his body in virtue at his workplace, and the beauty of his youth he covered with soot (black dust) from the coal. And whatever he earned from the pains of his labor he allocated in such a way as to fulfill the commandments of the Lord.

St. Gregory, having called Alexander out of the assembly of leaders, asked to be informed by the man in detail regarding his life. The Saint himself returned to the assembly and, with impromptu instructions about the Priesthood, described to those present the life of virtue. And he prolonged his instructions greatly, in order to hold the assembly and to prevent the participants from leaving until his servants had carried out the Saint's command and returned. Returning, they had Alexander with them, having bathed and cleaned the soot from him, and he was wearing the Saint's vesture (on his orders).

While all present turned their eyes toward Alexander and were astonished by what they saw, the Teacher said to them: "There is nothing unusual about being misled by one's eyes, or reckoning his judgment sound solely by the sense of sight; for, indeed, this sense is an inaccurate criterion in evaluating the truth of things, since it impedes us from fathoming the depth of the truth. In keeping with this, it was certainly dear to the Enemy of piety, the Devil, that the nomination process would be rendered ineffective by a lack of knowledge, so that there might not be made manifest therein a person to abrogate his tyranny."

Having said this, the Saint dedicated Alexander to God through the Priesthood, sealing him, in keeping with the manner dictated by the Holy Canons, with Divine Grace. And as all beheld the new Priest, the Saint exhorted him to address the congregation; and he immediately demonstrated how true the judgment which St. Gregory had made

about him was. For the words which he spoke were, though replete with lofty thought, nonetheless devoid of flowery rhetoric.

On this account, some arrogant young man, who knew the Attic Greek dialect and was present there, sarcastically criticized Alexander's unskilled homily, since it did not happen to be adorned with the rhetorical forms of the Attic dialect. But it is said that this young man was brought to his senses by way of a certain Divine vision; namely, he saw a flock of doves, shining with indescribable beauty, and heard someone say to him: "These doves belong to Alexander, whom you ridiculed."

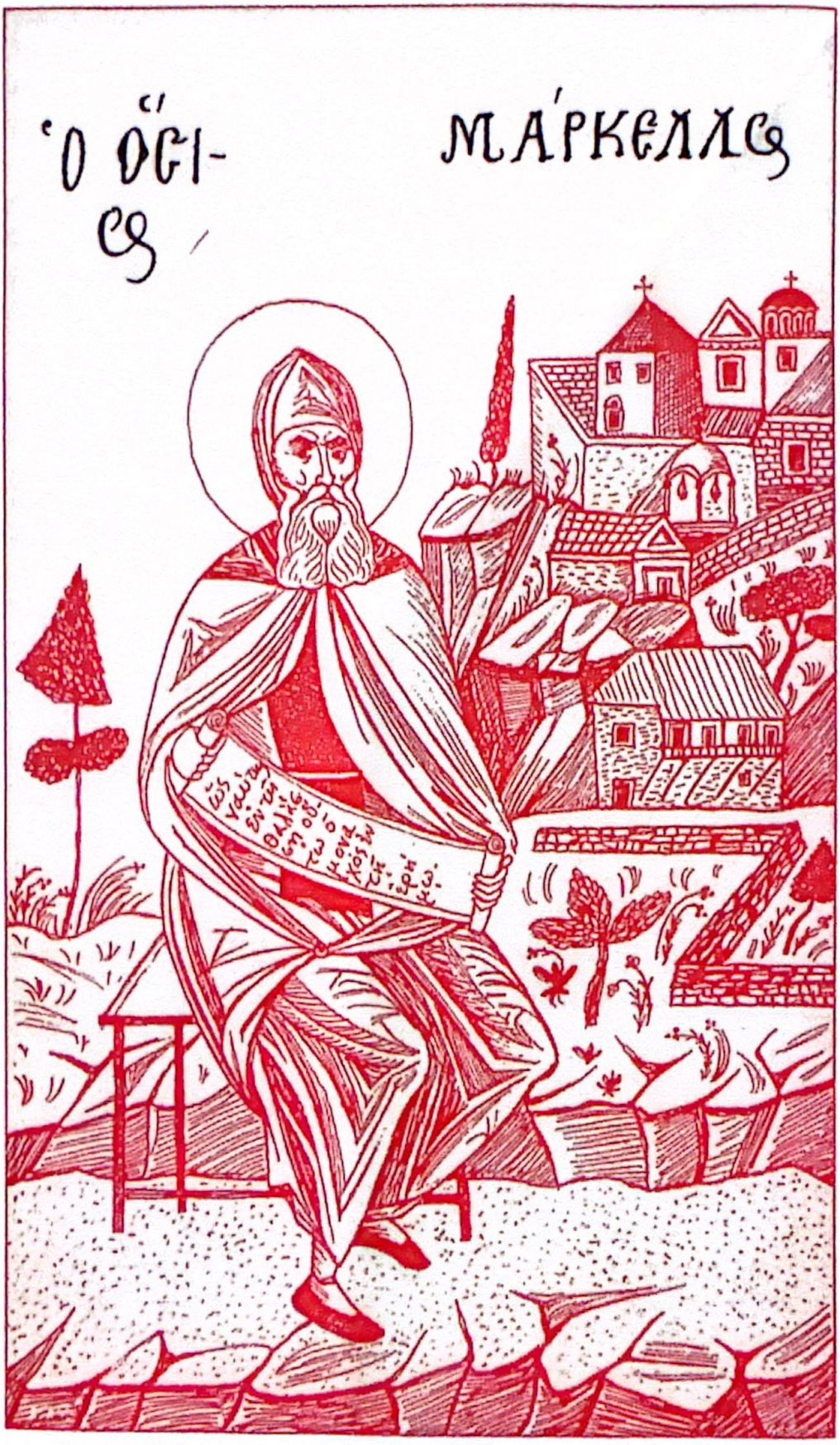
D. From the Life of St. Markellos

The Divine Markellos, who was from Apamea,*** went to the Monastery of the Unsleeping Ones.**** This monastery was thus called because in it the worship of God by the monks was unceasing, both day and night. Having become a brother, in a few years he was clothed with the monastic *schema* by the Abbot of the monastery, Alexander. Earlier on, a former acquaintance of Alexander, Iakovos, had been tonsured a monk at the same monastery. This Iakovos, having remained close to Alexander, was distinguished as the first among his disciples. But Markellos, after just a few years had gone by, not only surpassed the other monks, but also Iakovos himself in ascetic labors and virtues. Thus, he came to be greatly loved by Alexander.

After some time, owing to the purity of his spiritual faculties, Markellos foresaw the death of his master; moreover, he saw in advance that election to the position of Abbot would fall to him. And since he was afraid that perhaps, because he was still young, by becoming the Superior of the Elders he might thereby be cut off from his beloved obedience, by which he was much gratified, he—from exceeding modesty—left the monastery, without anyone knowing. Subsequently, the Divine Alexander having died shortly thereafter, the name of Markellos was on everyone's lips, and the fact that he was not present among them was the cause of great sadness. So, though he was among those nominated to become Abbot, but could not be found, John, a venerable, pious, and wise man, was judged worthy of this rank.

As soon as Markellos was informed about how things had turned out, he returned to the monastery as a co-worker of John, becoming his virtual right hand, sharing in his excellent administration of the monastery.

Once, when Markellos was absent on a trip, various accusations



St. Markellos

were made against him to John. The more experienced monks admired Markellos, because, as we said, he had so easily avoided becoming Superior and abandoned the Abbot's throne. The less diligent and slothful monks, however, who were ignorant of the worthiness of Markellos' soul, said that he had forgone glory precisely out of a love of glory; because—as they maintained—he knew well that John would be the preferred candidate for Abbot by the brotherhood and, not wishing to appear lower than he, for this reason went away from the monastery.

When John heard this, both wishing to stress to the monks that they should not so easily accuse someone and, at the same time, wishing to show them to what heights of humility Markellos had risen, he told them: "My children, we must judge others by their works." And without saying anything more, he decided that, when Markellos returned, he would assign him to the most menial task; that is, to look after the jackass. Indeed, then, as soon as he returned, in front of everyone the Abbot assigned Markellos to what was considered the demeaning task of caring for the jackass. But Markellos clearly made manifest his exceeding modesty; for he not only accepted the Abbot's command joyfully, but appeared even more elevated and happy.

With such joy—it was said—did he carry out his service, considering it a privilege, that he asked for written certification that he would never be taken from it. And this joy he expressed not only in words, but in practice. Nor did he devote just a little time to this obedience; on the contrary, he seemed to be ever more zealous in this work. So much did he prolong his obedience, that the other monks, asking his forgiveness, as well, begged him for some time to abandon this humble service. For it was quite unseemly for such a man, who was worthy of shepherding the rational flock and, in that rôle, greatly to help them, to be engaged in such a mean obedience, which even the lowliest monk could have fulfilled.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. It is said of Abba Pambo that for three years he persistently implored God, saying: "Do not bring me honor on earth." But so greatly did God glorify him, that no one could look on his face, on account of the glory thereupon, for it was exceedingly radiant. Abba Sisoes and Abba Silouan attained to the same gift of Grace as Abba Pambo.

2. St. John the Short tells us that a certain spiritual Elder closed him-

self in his cell and was famous throughout the city, enjoying great praise. Now, he was once informed that a great Saint was approaching death. "Go to him and greet him"—he was told—"before he reposes." However, he immediately thought: "If I leave my cell during the daytime, people will run behind me, giving me all kinds of praise; but I am ill at ease with that. So, let me set off late, when it is dark, so that no one will notice me."

And so, he went out of his cell late at night, wishing to avoid people. But behold what happened: Two Angels were sent by God to escort him by lamplight, so that he might walk surely. Seeing this glorious thing, all of those in the city ran after him.

Thus, as much as he wished to avoid glory, all the more was he glorified, in keeping with the saying of Holy Scripture: "Whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall abase himself shall be exalted" (St. Matthew 23:12).

3. Abba Isaac relates the following: "When I was younger, I stayed with Abba Kronios, who never asked me to do any work, even though he was old and had palsy. He would get up and give water from a pitcher both to me and others. As well, I stayed with Abba Theodore; neither did he ask me to do anything. He would set the dinner table himself and say to me: 'Brother, if you like, come to eat.' I would say to him, 'Abba, I moved in with you to be useful; why do you not, then, let me do something?' But the Elder always remained silent.

"I went to the Elders and told them this. Going to him, they said: 'Abba Theodore, this brother came to stay with your holiness in order to be useful; why do you not tell him to do something, too?' The Elder replied to them: 'Am I perhaps the Superior of some cœnobitic monastery, so that I can give him orders? It is not mine in the least to tell him anything. If he likes, let him do what he sees me doing.'

"From that time I managed to do whatever the Elder did. But he, in all that he performed, did so silently. And this taught me to do my work in silence."

4. Abba Peter said the following: "A number of people, seeing Abba Makarios so gentle before the other brothers and humbling himself before everyone, asked him: 'Why do you do this to yourself, Abba?'

"He replied: 'For twelve years I enslaved myself to Christ, so that He would give me this gift—and now you advise me to give it up?'"

5. Abba Poimen said that, if one humbles himself, he will find rest in any place that he settles.

6. About Abba Peter and Abba Epimachos the following is said: They were co-strugglers at Rhaïthou .***** It so happens that once, while they were eating in the Church, they were pressured to sit at the Elders' table. After much effort, only Abba Peter went.

When they rose to leave, Abba Epimachos asked Abba Peter: "How could you dare to go to the table of the Elders?"

Abba Peter answered him: "Had I sat with you, since I am older, the brothers would have turned to me to bless first, thus making me the greatest among all of you; but when I went to be with the Fathers, this made me the youngest of all, and thus humbler in my thoughts."

7. Peter, who was a Presbyter in the Dion Monastery,• when he happened to be praying with someone, even if he was coerced, on account of his Priesthood, to stand in front of that person, when he went for confession, as we read in the life of Abba Anthony, he stood behind everyone. And this he did without the slightest chagrin.

8. An Elder said: "Either avoid men by fleeing them or dupe the world by making yourself appear stupid the majority of the time."

F. From Abba Cassian

1. There once lived a young man of worldly importance, wealthy, and the son of illustrious parents; moreover, he was rather learned.

Now, he abandoned his father and all of his worldly glory and dedicated himself to the monastic life. In order that his faith and his humility might be put to the test, his Elder directed him, one day, to get up and load ten baskets on his shoulders and set off to sell them in the city from which he hailed—and not to sell them all at once, but one by one. He, indeed, fulfilled this command with all patience and humility; that is, he took the baskets on his shoulders, sold them one by one, paying no regard to the lowly nature of the affair, his illustrious background, or the insults that his selling baskets might have invited. For he took care continuously to show himself an imitator of the humility of Christ.

2. And we met another Father, Abba Pinouphrios, a man adorned with all of the virtues, who was a Priest and the Elder of a large cœno-

bitic monastery in Egypt, near the city of Panepho.••

Now he, seeing that everyone was praising him for his virtuous life, for his great age, and for the position that he held as Abbot, and seeing that he could not carry out the ascetic labors of humility, to which he had from the very beginning given himself over, secretly fled from his monastery because of his love of obedience. He settled as a solitary anchorite in the distant reaches of the Thebaid••• and, having shed his monastic *schema* and wearing the clothing of a layman, eventually went to the Tabennesi Monastery. He thought that they would thus pay no attention to who he was, both because of the great number of monks there and because this Tabennesi Monastery was very far from the place where his own monastery was located.

Having implored for a number of days to be received, the Elder finally accepted him, on account of his patience and persistence. Since he was old and could not be otherwise employed, he was assigned to the cultivation of the garden, along with another monk, whose disciple he became. Thus he put into practice his beloved humility and obedience. His work was not just that of the garden, but any other work which seemed difficult to the others he eagerly undertook.

He spent three years in this manner, without being noticed by anyone. In the meantime, his disciples were seeking after him throughout Egypt. Finally, after three years, a certain brother, who was visiting there, recognized him. When this brother first saw him, he thought he knew him from the characteristics of his face; but since he was not without doubt, he wanted to hear his voice. For he was not certain solely from the sight of his face, since he was looking on a man who had aged, who was holding a grub-axe, cultivating the ground, carrying a sack of manure on his shoulder, and spreading it over the roots of the vegetable plants.

But when, after carefully listening to his voice, he was able to determine who it was, he immediately fell at the feet of his Elder, to the great consternation of those present; for such gestures were being made to a man who for them was still a neophyte, who had only a short time before abandoned the world, and whom they considered the lowest. They were even more amazed, however, when they learned his name as well, which they had in the past heard mentioned with great admiration. Thus, they asked forgiveness, because, without knowing who he was, they had placed him among the last. After great entreaty, he was taken back to his monastery, against his desire and with lamentation, as the brothers would not allow him to succeed at his beloved obedience

and humility.

After remaining a short time at his monastery, he was overtaken once more by his desire for humility and obedience. Thus, looking to find the right opportunity, he left during the night, not this time to the Thebaid, but to an unknown country. And so it was that, having boarded a ship, he arrived in the Palestine, hoping that he could remain there unknown until the end of his life. He ended up at the monastery which is near the Cave where our Master Christ was born from the Virgin, and there he was received by the Abbot. During that time, I was also there. But even there, the Elder could not remain unknown for much time, in keeping with the voice of Christ our Master: "A city which is set on an hill cannot be hid" (St. Matthew 5:14).

Indeed, brothers coming from various parts of Egypt on pilgrimage to the Holy Land recognized him and, after many requests, entreaties, and tears, persuaded him to follow them back to his monastery.

I personally stayed for a short time with this holy man in Egypt, and I will relate those things which I heard when he was advising a brother who, in my presence, was being accepted as a novice in the monastery, so that you might know the man well, of what knowledge he was made worthy by God, and the extent to which he knew *by experience* the ideal of the ascetic life.

The author subsequently sets forth the advice of the Saint, which anyone who wishes to learn about will find it in his book [The Conferences—*Trans.*] *and be amazed when he reads it.*

G. From Abba Isaac

Lower yourself before all men and you will be exalted above the princes of this age; humble yourself, and you shall see the glory of God within you. For where humility springs up, in that place there also gushes forth the glory of God.

If one struggles openly to humble himself, God will make him to be glorified by all men; if you have humility in your heart, God will manifest His glory in your heart. When you labor for virtue, take care that others look down upon you, and you will thus be honored by God.

Despise honors, that you might be honored; honor flees from before him who runs after honor. Honor pursues him who flees honor, and such a one becomes a herald of his humility to all. If, to be humble, you hypocritically debase yourself, God will expose you; if, however, you truly lower yourself, God will appoint all of His creation to praise you.

There will then be opened before you the door to the glory of your Creator, and all shall laud you. For you shall abide in the image and likeness of God.

Who has ever beheld a man who, while illumined by his virtues, luminous in life, wise in knowledge, and humble of mind, yet appears unimportant among men?

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked a certain Elder: "How does one become foolish for the sake of Christ?"

And the Elder replied to him: "There was a young boy in a monastery. He was given to an ascetic Elder to rear and to teach the word of God. So, the Elder said to the boy, 'My child, when someone insults you, bless him; and when you are sitting at table, eat the spoiled food and leave the good. And when you have occasion to select articles of clothing, leave what is nice-looking and choose what is ugly.' The child then said to him, 'Are you perhaps telling me to do these things, Abba, because I seem stupid?' And the Elder answered: 'I told you to do these things so that you might become foolish for the sake of the Lord and so that the Lord might show you to be wise.' Behold the manner by which this Elder shows us that we can become foolish for the sake of the Lord."

2. Abba Daniel said of Abba Doulas that, at first, he stayed in a cœnobitic monastery for forty years; afterwards, he lived as a hermit in Sketis and was considered one of the greatest of the Fathers. "Now, he would say," Abba Daniel continues, "that '...having tasted of the two kinds of monastic life, I found that in the cœnobitic monastery they prospered more greatly in working for the virtues than the Hesychasts, if, of course, they applied themselves to obedience with their whole hearts.

"'In a certain cœnobitic monastery, there lived a brother who, though in appearance he seemed more worthy of scorn and less important than everyone else, was in wisdom, however, of great note and eminent. Alas, he was insulted and ridiculed by everyone, and often they would unjustly beat him. He suffered this with courage, without condemning anyone for anything.

"'Another brother in the monastery, through the operation of demonic forces, stole the holy Vessels from the Church, without anyone imagining that he had done it. Afterwards, there having been a search

conducted to find the stolen Vessels, everyone attributed the crime to the brother who had debased himself, condemning him for having committed the sacrilege.

"'Since he maintained that he was completely ignorant of the matter, he was deprived of his monastic habit by the Abbot personally, confined in chains, and given over to the Steward of the Lavra for examination. The Steward beat him with a whip and administered other punishments. Despite this, he confessed nothing, but continued, without changing his story, to protest his ignorance of what had taken place. At this, they turned him over to the civil Governor, so that he could be more severely punished by him.

"'The Governor put him through various tortures, searing his skin with hot irons and locking him away for many days without food in a dark and suffocating jail. Because he continued to deny committing the sacrilege, he was, on this account, condemned to death, in accordance with the dictates of the law, and this with the agreement of the Abbot and the brothers. For the sentence appointed for sacrilege was death. Thereupon, he was led away to be beheaded.

"'On seeing what was happening, the monk who had stolen the sacred things, pained in his soul, approached the Abbot and told him: "I know where the sacred Vessels can be found; thus, please see that the brother is not beheaded."

"'The Abbot conveyed this to the Governor. And as soon as the brother was released, he thereupon returned to the monastery. He lived for only three more days and, as he was praying, departed to the Lord, while kneeling.

"'All of the monks then gathered and, finding his body reposed in this repentant position, took it and transferred it to the Church, so that he could be buried there.

"'Immediately the wooden gong was struck (meaning the *talanton*), and the whole Lavra came together. Out of reverence, all of the Fathers rushed towards the body, wishing to take from it a small bit of his clothing as a blessing, or a strand of his hair for a blessing.

"'The Abbot, fearing that they might even divide up his body, took the remains into the Altar and closed them up securely, waiting for the Superior of the Lavra to come. In a short while, the latter came and, having lighted candles and incense, asked that the body be taken out of the Altar; and thus, the elder Priest rushed to open it quickly.

"'But when he opened the Altar and went in, along with several others, they found the reposed man's clothes and undergarments, but not

his body, which they ultimately could not find anywhere.

"Then everyone began to glorify God and to say tearfully among themselves: "Do you see, brethren, what great things humility and long-suffering bring to us? Let us thus struggle to endure temptations and self-abasement for the Lord; and truly will we be glorified and honored and rule together with him in Eternity."""

3. There once lived a certain Paul, an *Illustris*•••• by rank, who had a wife, children, and great riches. It was his wish to become a monk. Calling his wife and children together, he revealed to them this goal of his. He found them eager to accept it and, like him, desirous themselves of the monastic life. Given this, he told them: "If, in fact, you want to succeed in this desire, I will sell you as slaves to monastic institutions." And they accepted this with joy.

Taking his wife, then—who in the meantime had clothed herself in poor raiment and taken on the appearance of a slave—as well as her portion of their household goods, he went with her to a convent, where he gave her over to the Abbess as a servant; along with her, he gave the Abbess all of her personal property. Subsequently, in like manner, he took his children to another monastery, where he sold them to the Abbot as servants, together with their possessions. Finally, going to another monastery himself, he did the same thing, selling himself into slavery.

After this, he said to the Abbot: "If it is permitted, I would like to go into the Church by myself." The Abbot having allowed this, he went in. He immediately closed all of the doors of the Church securely and, raising his hands up to Heaven, cried out: "My God, Thou knowest that I have, with all of my heart, dedicated myself to Thee." And in response, he heard a voice say: "Yea, I know this, and I have accepted thee with all of My heart."

And so he remained for a great time in the monastery, fulfilling, like a servant, every lowly duty, submitting without complaint to everyone. In this way, he was raised up by God for his humility; and after his death, his tomb gave forth myrrh and many miracles took place there.

I. Concerning Evphrosynos the Cook

In a certain monastery, there lived a young monk by the name of Evphrosynos. He served the brotherhood as a cook in the kitchen. Since he was kept continually unkempt by ashes and smoke, most everyone paid him no heed at all; in this way, he was successful in concealing his

bright virtue. For, since he was constantly covered with ashes and blackened by smoke, the more indolent brothers ridiculed and made fun of him and heaped insults, injury, and mockery on him. His abject clothing, his quiet countenance, his silence, and his tolerant attitude they took as an excuse for this, and thus, without fear, they made fun of him, humiliated him, and even struck him.

Now, the Abbot of this monastery, who conducted all things in a God-pleasing way and had, in this manner, achieved great boldness before God, was once beset by the following thought: namely, he desired to know precisely who, from his monastery or from among his spiritual flock, was greater in virtue than the other brothers and who was unlike unto all the others in the fulfillment of the commandments of God.

And since he was continually beset by this thought, he besought God persistently to bring his desire to fruition and to reveal to him the one who was first in virtue among the brothers.

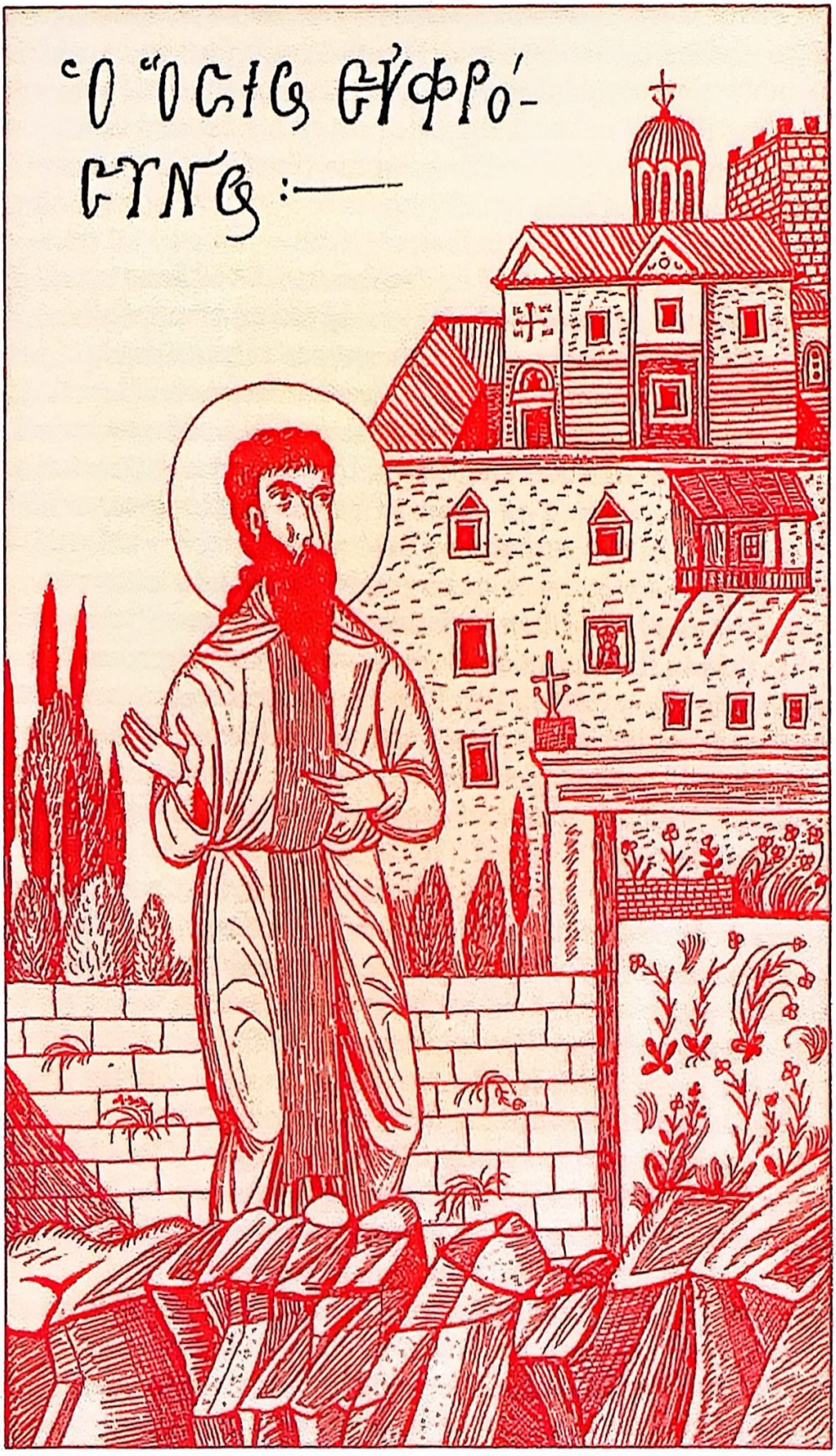
So, as he was praying alone one night, he fell into ecstasy and was carried off to a place of indescribable charm and which evoked great delight; that is, it was filled with a wondrous fragrance and was adorned with every kind of tree. The fruit of these trees was dissimilar to the fruit from any known tree and was completely different both in its beauty and size, being superior beyond description. Below these trees there ran pure water, and the sight and the beauty of the place were truly splendid.

The Abbot, gazing on all of this, thanked God, the Cause of all good things, and considered himself fortunate to have been made worthy of such a great honor. Then, wanting these wondrous fruits, he ran to pick some of them; however, he could not, since the fruit, along with the branches, was too far up. Having tried several times to fulfill his wish without success, and his hands remaining empty below the trees, he saw that young brother who bore the name of joy, "Evphrosynos" ["joyous" in Greek—*Trans.*], walking before him in the midst of this most gracious Paradise, enjoying bountifully all that was to be found there, the tree branches leaning down to him and offering up their fruit, so that he could cut it off and eat whatever he wished.

Surprised by this strange sight, he said: "My child, Evphrosynos, who brought you to this place and gave you permission to stay here?"

And he, with a smiling face, replied: "Father, the only lover of man, God, entrusted to me these good things that you see, to enjoy them and to have them under my authority."

Again the Abbot said: "And can you now give *me* some of that



St. Evphrosynos

fruit?"

"You can take as much as you like, Father," Evphrosynos answered.

"No, I cannot my child," the Abbot said, "for as many times as I tried, I could not."

Then Evphrosynos, boldly approaching a tree, took with his hand fruit therefrom—they were apples and were truly splendid to behold and to smell—and gave three of them to the Elder.

The Elder, receiving them with great joy, immediately awoke from his vision and, indeed, found these three apples in his hand. Wholly filled with fear and trembling, he ordered immediately that the *talanton* be sounded; but he did not at that time, while saying the morning service with the brothers, make any comment about all that he had seen. However, as soon as the appointed hour for the Divine Liturgy came, all of the brothers having been gathered in the Church, he liturgized himself, celebrating together with them the Divine Mysteries. After the dismissal, standing before the Holy Table, he once more took up his Priestly vestments, ordering that the brother Evphrosynos be summoned.

Several of the brothers, therefore, ran to the kitchen and quickly got him, leading him to the Abbot just as they had found him—his face and clothes all soiled with ashes and smoke from the kitchen.

The Abbot then asked him: "My child, where were you last night?"

The brother lowered his head towards the ground and gave no answer at all.

But since the Abbot insistently repeated his question and pressured him to answer, the young man, his eyes filled with tears, answered him in a serene and humble voice: "Do you not know, Father, where both of us were?"

Then the Abbot, overcome by awe, forthwith produced the three apples and asked the brother: "Perhaps you recognize these?"

"Yes, Father," Evphrosynos replied. "As you know, I gave them to you, as you directed."

"Evphrosynos, my child, you are blessed, for you have been made worthy to enjoy such spiritual riches; thus, I ask that you become the protector of my own wretched soul." Continuing, he related to the brothers those things which he had seen in his vision.

The Abbot then fell at Evphrosynos' feet, while the latter became very upset with this, feeling ill at ease, crying with sighs at this extreme show of homage and completely undone by lamentations and tears.

Afterwards, the Abbot took him by the hand and led him into the Altar. There, having cut up these three apples in small portions into a sa-

cred vessel, he gave to each of the brothers from these portions.

The young man, in that he was unable to accept the honors and laudations shown him by everyone, secretly fled from the monastery and disappeared; for he considered the praises of men as assaults and greatly destructive to the soul. Thus, he most prudently preferred to remove himself far from these honors, so as to succeed in saving his soul.

* Tabenne (or Tebenna, Tabennesi, or Tabennesos [Tabennesus—*Trans.*]) is an island in the Nile River in Upper Egypt, near Desna [Dendera—*Trans.*]. St. Pachomios built a monastery on this island at the beginning of the fourth century. Thousands of monks gathered there, who were called, after the name of the island, "Tabennesiotans."

** There were two ancient cities in Asia Minor which had the name Komana, one in Cappadocia, which was called Cappadocian Komana, and the other in Pontos, which was designated Pontian Komana. It was in this latter city, exiled there by the Empress Evdokia, that St. John Chrysostomos reposed. Here, we are concerned with the inhabitants of Pontian Komana, which borders on the city of Neocæsarea, also in Pontos, from which it is about seventy kilometers distant, lying just below it to the south. It is in Neocæsarea that St. Gregory the Wonderworker was born *circa* 213 A.D. He also became the first Bishop of this city (*circa* 240) and shepherded its Church for thirty years. He worked in a super-human fashion, and with such self-denial, to propagate Christianity that, as St. Gregory of Nyssa relates regarding him, when he became Bishop of Neocæsarea, there were only seventeen Christians, while after his death there were only seventeen pagans to be found.

*** Apamea was a city in Syria, located south of Antioch on the River Orontes. This city was previously called Phournake but was named Apamea by King Seleucos, the son of Nicanor, in honor of his wife, Apama; it had about 120,000 inhabitants. Apamea was destroyed by King Chosroes II of Persia (590-628 A.D.). He also occupied and sacked Jerusalem, carrying the Precious Cross off to Persia. The village of Kalat el-Mudik lies near its ruins today.

**** The Monastery of the Unsleeping Ones was situated on the Bosporos [also called the "Bosporus" or "Bosphorus"—*Trans.*], near the mouth of the Black Sea. It gained renown because its monks did not cease chanting and praying, night and day. The original founder of the Monastery of the Unsleeping Ones was Alexander, but it was Markellos who gave systematic form to the unceasing psalmody of the monks. Under his Abbotcy, the monastery had three hundred monks, whom Markellos divided into three (or, according to some, six) groups, each group succeeding the other, after a specified time, in such a way that there was prayer without interruption night and day. Our Holy Father Markellos flourished during the second half of the fifth century A.D. (See the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XII, p. 736.)

***** See the endnotes for Hypothesis XXXII, Book I—*Editors.*

• Dion ["Dios," in some sources—*Trans.*] is in all likelihood the name of a locality in which the monastery bearing that name was established.

•• Panepho or Panephysis was an ancient city in Lower Egypt. Today it is called Menzaleh el Hayit.

••• The Thebaid [Thebaïd] was a prefecture of ancient Egypt, the capital of which was Thebes, known today as Luxor and Karnak. The Thebaid, where the anchoretic life flourished, became a refuge for persecuted Christians.

•••• *"Illustris"* was a title given to the highest officials of the Roman Empire, from the time of Diocletian onwards. This title did not correspond to any specific office. It is rendered today by "His Lordship" (*Eklamprotatos*) or "His Excellency" (*Exochotatos*).

Hypothesis II

By nature, abasement invites humility, while honor invites pride; and so it is that those who are of humble mind, when they are scorned, rejoice, while they become sorrowful if they are shown homage.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

A certain Constantine, a very pious man who lived near the city of Ancona,* served the Church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr. Once, the oil being depleted and having nothing with which to light the vigil lamps, he filled them with water and, after he had as usual placed a wick in each one, lighted them as though they were filled with oil.

Now this man, who performed such miracles, was known for how humble he was. Since his reputation had reached far and wide, on account of the miracles that God performed for him, no small number of people from various places rushed to meet him; and thus there came a certain farmer from far away, in order to see him.

The Saint happened, at the time, to be standing on a four-legged wooden stool, making ready the vigil lamps. He was very short in height, with a thin body and ugly face. Now, the farmer insistently asked to be shown who this most pious man, Constantine, was. Those present pointed him out (the man who was standing on the stool) to the farmer.

The farmer, judging the man by his bodily exterior, concluded, upon seeing such a short and thin man, that this could not be the man about whom he had heard, since he was reputedly a big man.

But when he heard from others, too, that this was truly the pious Constantine, and none other, the farmer—repulsed by the man's figure and the external appearance of his body—said sarcastically:

"I anticipated seeing a man; but he does not even bear the slightest resemblance to a man." On hearing these words, the man of God left the vigil lamps and quickly ran to the farmer to embrace him. Putting his arms around him, he began kissing him sincerely and proclaiming that he owed him great thanks for the judgment which he had rendered of him. And he said to the farmer: "Your eyes alone are open to seeing who I am."

Imagine then, Peter, what great humility this wondrous man had, to the point of loving, with lavish love, that farmer, who had found him repulsive. For an offensive insult which is rendered externally reveals the character which one has concealed internally.

Just as the proud feel satisfaction with honors, so those who are humble of mind are especially thankful for the attacks and scorn which befall them; namely, when they are thought worthy of disdain in the eyes of the many.

That is, when they are despised by others, the humble of mind reckon correct the very vision that these other people have of them; for as they consider themselves, so would they have others think about them.

B. From the Life of St. Ephraim

The wondrous Ephraim, aside from the other virtues which he possessed, had as well this gift: *viz.*, the gift of fearing and avoiding praise—and not just to avoid approaching those who praised him, but also to appear displeased with them, in the way that others might be upset with someone who made fun of them or derided them. When he was praised, he would get embarrassed and his face would change color, being drenched by droplets of perspiration, and he would become completely silent, as though his shame had cut off his voice.

C. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike would say to those who visited her that, just as wax melts near fire, so the soul is crippled by praise and loses its power. On the contrary, just as cooling will harden a candle that is melting from the heat, making it rigid, so insults and scorn strengthen the soul and stabilize it. For indeed, as Holy Scripture says, "Rejoice and be thankful when men shall revile you and persecute you" (see St. Matthew 5:11), and so on. And in another place: "In mine affliction Thou did set me at large" (Psalm 4:1).

Not only this, but abasement is that which naturally instills in the soul the most important of the virtues, that is, humility. For in reality, humility takes its energy from the ridicule, insults, blows, and mockery visited on us: for one to hear it said of himself that he is brainless, poor, of low birth, sickly, and slothful in his work, or for one to be called stupid or be accused of looking pitiable.

Things of this sort strengthen humility; such things our Lord heard and endured. He was called, for example, a Samaritan who had a devil (St. John 8:48). He was struck, wounded, and called a deceiver and thief. Now, we must also imitate the true humility of the Lord. Because there are many who pretend to be humble in external form, and thus gain, in this way, glory among men; however, by their fruits, it is made known that they are not humble, since when they are in the slightest bit insulted, they cannot bear this, but immediately, like vipers, pour out their poison.

D. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

The marvellous Patriarch John had a nephew whose name was George. It so happened that he was once insulted by a certain inn-keeper in the city. He was very much offended by this and bore it heavily. The reason for this was the great difference in the social status of the one, by virtue of his relationship to the Patriarch, and of the other, who, in spite of his insignificance, had insulted the former. So, the nephew went privately to see the Blessed Patriarch, complaining to him with tears, his heart hardened, about the outrage which had befallen him.

Patriarch John, seeing that his nephew was overcome with emotion and wishing to comfort him and give him courage, told him: "This man dares to open his mouth and so greatly insult my much-beloved nephew? May the Lord be blessed. I will do something to him which will startle all of Alexandria." As soon as he saw that his nephew had taken some comfort from his upset, he added: "My troubled child, if you truly wish to be my nephew, and be called such, be ready to accept not only insults, but, if I may say something more, even beatings. For true nobility is characterized not by bloodlines, but by the virtue of one's soul."

He then immediately called the overseer for the city's inn-keepers and ordered that he no longer accept the usual contribution—or any other assistance—to the Church from the man who had insulted his nephew. Thus, everyone was amazed by the inimitable forbearance of the Saint, understanding that this was the *punishment* appointed for the inn-keeper that was to startle all of Alexandria.

E. From the Narrative of the Travels of St. John the Theologian

When the Apostle John was saved from that fearful shipwreck,**

and the sea forty days later deposited him near Ephesus, he found me—Prochoros—also standing on the beach, exactly as he had charged me before the shipwreck. When he had embraced me and thanked God, he afterwards took me with him; together we went to Ephesus and stayed in an area that was called the Place of Artemis. There Dioskorides, a leader of the city, had a bathhouse nearby.

Then John said to me, "My child, Prochoros, let none of the inhabitants of the city learn who we are and for what reason we came here, until such a time as the Lord reveals His Will to us and we come to boldness in God."

While the Apostle was still saying this, along came Romana, a brazen hussy and servant of Dioskorides, who took care of the bathhouse. Everyone avoided this woman because of her extreme nastiness. As she was looking after the baths, she noticed us. Now, she immediately thought, surmising from our poor appearance that we were in need of food, that because of our poverty we would be useful to carry out tasks at the bathhouse, without her having to pay us a large salary. Thus, she said to John: "Fellow, where are you from? What is your religion?"

"We are foreigners. Jewish by descent, but by the Grace of God, Christians. Just a short time ago we were saved from a shipwreck."

She added: "Would you like to light the fire for the baths, and your companion to take on some work on the exterior of the bathhouse?"

The Apostle John accepted the offer and agreed to the work.

So, straightaway she led us to the bathhouse and appointed us to do various labors. Every day, she gave to us three *litrai* of bread for our food and four *oboloi.**** About the fourth day of our stay there, John, out of difficulty in lighting the bath fire, was unable to warm the baths to the required temperature.

When Romana came and saw this, she impudently struck John with her hand and, having knocked him to the ground, assailed him in an hysterical voice: "You pitiful derelict," she said to him, "exiled because you cannot do anything—why did you agree to take work such as this? It looks like you are a swindler. I am going to expose your schemes. You are working for Romana, who is known as far away as Rome. From now and henceforth, you will be my slave. Do not get it into your head that you can flee from your mistress, because it would be very easy for her to capture you again, if you dare to try something like that. And I will do you in for your misdeed. Get rid of any evil thought, then, and just as you pay attention to food, so heed your servitude, lest you die mer-

cilessly."

John kindly answered her: "Mistress, just a short time ago I began this work, about which I knew nothing previously; time, however, which enriches a man with experience, will certainly make me skilled in this labor."

The hussy left after this. I was overtaken profoundly by worry, however, from all that had so harshly happened to John, and all this before even four days had passed since arriving at that place.

As soon as the Apostle John understood, with his spiritual insight, the thoughts that I had, he said:

"Prochoros, my child, you know the kind of shipwreck that befell us because of my doubtful thoughts about the fact that the lot of Asia fell upon me. Not only we, but the rest of the passengers, who were in no way responsible, suffered the consequences of my chastisement, so that they too were shipwrecked, even if, ultimately, they were saved by the Providence of God. And I suffered forty days in the water, in order to learn that I should yield to God and not to mundane thoughts, until God, by His mercy, brought me to dry land. Knowing these things, you should not be upset, but thank God for temptations; and do not even *consider* the cool threats of a little old woman a temptation. So, go and take up your work and do it with abundant care. For our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Creator of all things, when He became our Prototype and Guide in perfection, showed to us the profit of patience, saying: 'In your patience possess ye your souls' (St. Luke 21:19)."

Since these words drove the sadness from my soul, he gave me courage. The next day, then, Romana came and said to John: "I have heard a lot said against you: that you are not careful about your work and that you have no intention of completing it, so that you will be let go. You will gain nothing thinking things like that, and your brains are serving you ill; for if I find out that this is true, I will not leave one part of your body intact, but I will crush every member of it."

To these things, John did not answer back at all; and Romana, taking his mildness and peacefulness for cowardice and stupidity, even more nastily threatened him and said: "Are not you my slave, you wicked one? What do you say? Do you accept your lot? Speak. Tell me." "Yes," John said, "we are your slaves, both my companion, Prochoros, and I."

She, encouraged by our words, immediately set out to take away our freedom. Without delay, she went to see a certain solicitor and presented her cunning scheme to him: "Two slaves whom I inherited from

my parents escaped four years ago; along with them, over the passage of time, were also lost their ownership papers. But they have now returned to me and have admitted that they are my slaves. So, can I draw up new purchase and ownership papers?" To this, the solicitor replied: "If they acknowledge before witnesses that they are your slaves by way of your parents, then you can do this."

John, understanding all of this through spiritual insight, said to me: "My child, Prochoros, know that this hussy will ask from us, shortly, a written confession, since she wants to confirm, with witnesses, the ruse that we are her slaves. Be careful that you do not feel sorrow in your heart, on this account, but rather joy. Because by this test of ours, we will be glorified by God, and He will reveal who we are."

While John was still saying this, Romana appeared. Grabbing John by the hand, she started hitting him in the face and said to him: "Why, you evil servant, did you not greet your mistress and bow before her, when you saw her coming? You are the slave of Romana." And she forthwith asked him menacingly: "Are you not my slave?" John answered her: "Not only once, but twice I told you that we are servants." "And slaves of whom, you derelict?" she asked again. "Of Him at Whose work we labor," John replied. "That is right," Romana said in conclusion, "the work is mine and you are my slaves." And John added: "Both in word and in writing we confess that we are servants." "I want it in writing," she said, "in front of witnesses." "If you wish," John said, "and do not lose time in doing what you intend to do."

Thus, taking us with her, she led us somewhere near the Temple of Artemis, to a public area, where she obliged us to confess in writing that we were her slaves. She then led each of us back to the work at the bathhouse, to which she had already assigned us. In this bathhouse, there had resided from its establishment a demon who, three times a year, would lie in wait and drown anyone who went there without protection.

Now, Domnos, the son of Dioskorides, looking after his bodily beauty, went alone to the bathhouse, just after midnight, to bathe. The demon pounced on him, suddenly, and drowned him. When his servants came and found him dead, they went out crying and saying: "Woe to us, for our master is dead. What will we do now?" As soon as Romana heard about this, she tore off her headcovering and pulled at her hair, crying and shouting with lamentation: "Woe is me. What am I to do? What will I say to my lord, Dioskorides, when he learns of this? There is no solace to be had in this disaster. Maybe he will die, being

unable to bear the weight of this grievous news. For my lord Domnos was an only son. 'O Great Artemis of Ephesus, help us.'"

Saying this and more, she tore her skin and beat her face. John, coming out of the place where he was working, said to me: "My child, Prochoros, what happened? What happened to this woman?" As soon as Romana saw us speaking together, she grabbed John tightly and said: "You magician, we know the magic that you performed; for since the day that you arrived, our god has abandoned us. Either you resurrect my lord's son, or at this very moment I will separate your body from your soul." John said to her: "Mistress, explain to me: What is the cause of your sorrow?" Then she, overcome by uncontrolled rage, raised up her hand and hit John, saying: "Cunning slave—exiled for your evil deeds. All of Ephesus already knows what happened, yet you ask, as though you knew nothing. The son of my master Dioskorides died inside the baths."

When John heard this, he seemed to me somehow joyful. And setting himself to prayer, without anyone noticing, he went into the bathhouse. He immediately cast out the unclean spirit from there and restored the soul of the dead boy to his dead body. And taking him by the hand, he led him out, saying to Romana, "Take the living son of your master and do not concern yourself." When Romana saw this event, she was amazed; and falling at John's feet, she asked that he forgive her for all of the evil things that she had done. He then answered her: "Woman, believe on our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom I am a Disciple and Apostle, and all of these things will be forgiven you." She said to him: "I believe, O man of God, from this moment in all that comes from your mouth."

In the meantime, one of Dioskorides' servants had run to tell him of his son's death. Dioskorides, not expecting this disaster, immediately collapsed, as though run through by a sword, and died. When John heard of this, he went and resurrected him as well. And all of those who came to believe he also baptized. Many other citizens of Ephesus, because of these events, also embraced the Christian Faith and were joined to the Church.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Several brothers once visited Abba Agathon, for they had been informed that he was possessed of great spiritual discretion. And wishing to test him, to see if he would become angry, they said: "Are you Agathon? We have heard said of you that you are debauched and

proud." He replied: "Yes, it is so." They said to him once more, "Are you Agathon, the loose-tongued lover of slander?" "I am he," he responded. And the visitors spoke to him a third time: "Are you Agathon, the heretic?" To this, he answered, "I am not a heretic." After this answer, they asked him to explain: "Why, when we called you so many things, did you admit to them, while you would not, however, endure the accusation that you were a heretic?" And the Abba said to them: "The first things I accepted, since they were beneficial for my soul; but not the accusation that I am a heretic, since heresy is separation from God." On hearing this reply, the visitors marvelled at the spiritual discretion of the Abba and departed, benefited in soul.

2. An Elder said: "He who praises a monk hands him over to Satan."

3. The Elders relate that a few dried figs were once given to the skete. Because they were of poor quality, none of them was sent to Abba Arsenios, so as not to insult him. When Elder Arsenios was informed of this, he would not attend the usual gathering (*synaxis*) of the monks, saying: "They have cut me off from the brotherhood, by not giving to me from the blessings that were bestowed upon the brothers by God and of which I was not worthy to partake." All who heard this benefited from the humility of the Elder. Immediately thereupon, the Priest of the skete went to take him figs, and with great joy he returned with the Elder to the monastic gathering.

4. It is said of Abba Ammonas that several people went to him to have him settle a dispute. The Elder, however, played stupid (pretending to be a fool). A woman standing near him said: "This Elder is stupid." Now, when the Elder heard this, he called her up close to him and said: "I have undertaken so many labors here in this desert to attain this stupidity; and now today, for you, I should set it aside? No."

5. In the [hermits'—*Trans.*] Cells, a monastic gathering was once held regarding a certain matter. At this gathering, Abba Evagrios also spoke. Thereupon, the Presbyter said to him: "Abba, we know that, were you in your homeland, you might perhaps be a Bishop or the leader of many people; but here, you are a foreigner." The Abba, feeling stung by this, but without becoming upset, bowed his head, saying: "Truly it is so, Father. I spoke once. I will not speak a second time."

6. Abba John said that the door to Heaven is humility; and our Fathers entered into the City of God, after having tasted of many insults.

7. The same Abba said to his brother: "Even though we are quite insignificant before men, let us be glad for this, so that God might honor us." He was always of warm spirit. It so happened that someone who once visited him complimented him on his handiwork (he occupied himself with plaiting ropes); he remained silent. Again, his visitor complimented him on his handiwork; and once more, he remained silent. When the visitor complimented him a third time, Abba John told him: "From the moment that you came in here, you removed God far from me."

8. The same Abba was also once standing in the skete, where the brothers were gathered around him, confessing their thoughts. One of the Elders said to him: "John, just as a prostitute spruces herself up, in order to attract lovers, so you also do." Embracing him, Abba John told him: "What you say is true, Father." After this event, some of his disciples asked him: "Abba, were you not at all disturbed by this within yourself?" And he replied, "No, for as I appear to be externally, so I am internally."

9. Abba James said, "Let him who is complimented think of his sins and keep well in mind that he is not worthy of the things that he is told, so that he will not be too badly damaged by these compliments."

10. It is said of Abba Makarios that, when some brother visited him, thinking him a great Elder and showing him great respect, the Elder would not speak with him at all. However, if one of the brothers said to him, as if to humiliate him, "Abba, when you were a camel-driver and were caught stealing saltpeter**** and selling it, did the jail guards beat you?"—if, indeed, one of them spoke to him in this way, he would happily answer anything that he was asked.

11. The following is told about Abba Moses [the Black]: When he became a clergyman and his vestments were put on him, the Archbishop said to him: "Now you have become completely white." To this Abba Moses responded: "Alas, did the Pope***** ordain the inner or the outer man?" Wishing to test him, the Archbishop told the other clergy: "When Abba Moses enters the Holy Altar, throw him out; but follow him, to

see what he says." So, then, when he came into the Altar, they chided him and threw him out. He, on exiting, said to himself: "They treated you correctly, you black-skinned Negro. Since you are not a human, why should you expect to be among humans?"

12. An Elder said: "He who is shown by men more honor than he deserves is harmed; those whom men do not show honor at all, however, will be glorified in the Heavens by God."

13. A brother asked a certain Elder: "Tell me something which I can apply in order, thereby, to achieve eternal life." And the Elder answered: "If you can bring insult upon yourself and accept this insult, this is the greatest accomplishment—one greater than all of the virtues."

14. An Elder said: "A humble man is not he who is self-deprecating and who uses humble words, but he who joyfully endures the deprecations and dishonor that are directed to him by his neighbor."

15. The same Elder said another time: "If a man praises you to your face, immediately call to mind your sins and ask him to stop. 'In the name of God, brother,' say to him, 'stop praising me, for I am wretched and do not deserve it.' Now, if the man who has praised you is a person of importance, one of rank, then pray inwardly from your heart to God. Say, 'Protect me, O Lord, from the praise and slander of men.'"

16. Abba John the Short was once sitting in front of the Church. The brothers were gathered around him, confessing their thoughts. When one of the Elders saw this, he was overcome with jealous anger and said to the Abba: "Your pot is filled with poison." John quietly said to him: "So it is, Abba. But you said this on seeing what is on the outside. If you could see what is on the inside, *then* what would you not say?"

17. A monastic gathering was once convened in the skete. The Fathers, wanting to test Abba Moses, insulted him with the following words: "Why does this Negro want to be among us?" Abba Moses, though he heard this, said nothing. When the meeting had ended and the brothers dispersed, several said to Abba Moses: "Were you not at all disturbed by what you heard?" "I was upset," he replied, "but I did not speak."

18. Abba Poimen said: "Whatever difficulty comes your way, it can be overcome by silence."

19. It is said of an Elder that, whenever someone insulted him or he thought someone was angry at him, the more closely he drew to that person. "They," he was accustomed to saying, "become the cause of achievements for those who are aware of it; on the contrary, those who praise us mislead and upset the soul, as it is said in Holy Scripture: 'Those who lead [praise] thee cause thee to err' (Isaiah 3:12)."

G. From Abba Isaiah

1. Abba Isaiah said: "If, out of mean-spiritedness, your brother should enter into dispute with you, happily tolerate him; and if you examine your thoughts, as though God were judging you, you will find that you have sinned."

2. To humble your soul before God will render you capable of enduring insult without becoming upset; and the tears shed thereby deliver one from all human things. Failure to accuse oneself leads one to fail at enduring the wrath of others.

3. He who is humble is unmoved by the derision of others, since his own sins, when he recalls them, become for him an arsenal of weapons that protect him from anger and the desire to retaliate; and so, he withstands patiently all that befalls him. For what accusation can be made by anyone that is worse than that which he feels before God at the remembrance of his sins?

4. He who can, for the sake of God, endure the harsh words of an impolite and stupid person, and thereby keep his thoughts at peace, the same is able to attain peace of body, mind, and soul. And if these three are in harmony and cease turning their weapons against the rule of the spiritual faculty, and cut off its captivity by the flesh, then such a person will be called a son of peace. And the Holy Spirit will abide in him, that he might be wholly His, and He will not depart from him.

5. Brother, you should believe that the insults and dishonor visited on you for the sake of the Lord are of great profit and to the salvation of your soul; therefore, accept them readily and without upset, with the

thought, "I deserve to suffer even more, on account of my sins," and "Whatever the Lord deigns is of great value for me." "Perhaps," you should further think, "with the great tribulations and dishonor that I have experienced, I have become, if even for a moment, an imitator of the Passions of my God." As many times as you recall those who cause you torment, pray for them with your whole heart, and sincerely, as though they were the cause of great profit, without complaining about them in the least.

6. Contrarily, as though they entailed fearful death, the destruction of your soul, and eternal damnation, completely turn away from—and despise—all love of power and glory and the desire for the various laudations of men.

7. Sternly look after yourself, if someone should upset you about any matter whatsoever and sadness or anger should be roused within you; remain silent and say no more than what you must, until your heart is first made calm by prayer and after you have cleared up things with your brother.

H. From Abba Mark

1. The scorn of men creates grief in the heart; however, it becomes the occasion for sanctification for one who endures it. If you wish to be praised by men, without being censured for this, be keen to check your sins. Whatever shame one puts up with for the truth of Christ, a hundred times more will he ultimately be glorified by the world; in order to inherit future things, it is best to work for every good. When you see that some inner thought is urging you to seek the glory of men, know well that this thought is setting you up for disgrace.

2. The root of disgraceful desire is human praise, just as the root of wisdom is the control of evil—and not just when we hear praise, but when we accept it. When you are injured or scorned or rejected by someone, do not think about the present, but rather anticipate the future life, and you will find that this person has been the cause of many good things, not only in the present, but also in the future age.

3. If you see someone praise you hypocritically, at the same time expect to be slandered by him. When you are presented with some insult

from men, keep in mind that you will be repaid in glory from God; and if, in the instance of being insulted, you remain settled, without being grieved, then in the instance of being praised, should it come, you will be found faithful and irreproachable.

4. If, by the allowance of God, you have the praise of many, take care not to mingle any ostentation with the Providence of God, by which you were granted praise, so that you do not become proud and fall thereby to something contrary to God's Providence. When you see someone weeping and suffering because of the insults paid to him, know that, because he is overcome by the thought of vainglory, he is reaping, without knowing so, the bounty of the evil seeds planted in his heart. He who loves pleasure is made sad by slander and maltreatment; on the contrary, he who loves God is saddened by laudations and the other surfeits.

I. From Abba Isaac

Endure degradation and humiliation with good will, so as to acquire the boldness of an unimpeded relationship with God. When a man willingly endures every harsh word (providing that he has not previously sinned against the man who utters such words), though he takes upon his head a thorny crown, he is nonetheless blessed; for, at an unknown time he will receive an imperishable crown. The perfection of humility lies in the ability to withstand degradation and every false accusation with joy. For he who is truly humble of mind does not become flustered when he is unjustly accused, nor does he defend himself in the face of the wrong done to him; rather, he accepts this slander as though it were true. And he does not try to convince people that he has been unjustly accused, but rather asks forgiveness.

Indeed, many have themselves provided reason for being characterized as profligates, without being so. Some have been called adulterers and endured this, though they were wholly innocent of the charge. They tearfully took upon themselves the fruit of a sin which they did not commit (indeed, asking forgiveness of their detractors for a sin which they did not commit), whereas, in fact, they had crowned their souls wholly with purity and virginity. Yet others, so as not to be praised for virtue, which they hid within them, appeared to men as insane, though they were seasoned by Divine salt and stable in their inner joy, such that, on account of their great perfection, the Holy Angels her-

alded their feats. Do not, then, think that you are humble, if you cannot accept condemnation for even insignificant things. If, indeed, you want to find out if you are truly humble, test yourself by whatever befalls you.

J. From the *Gerontikon*

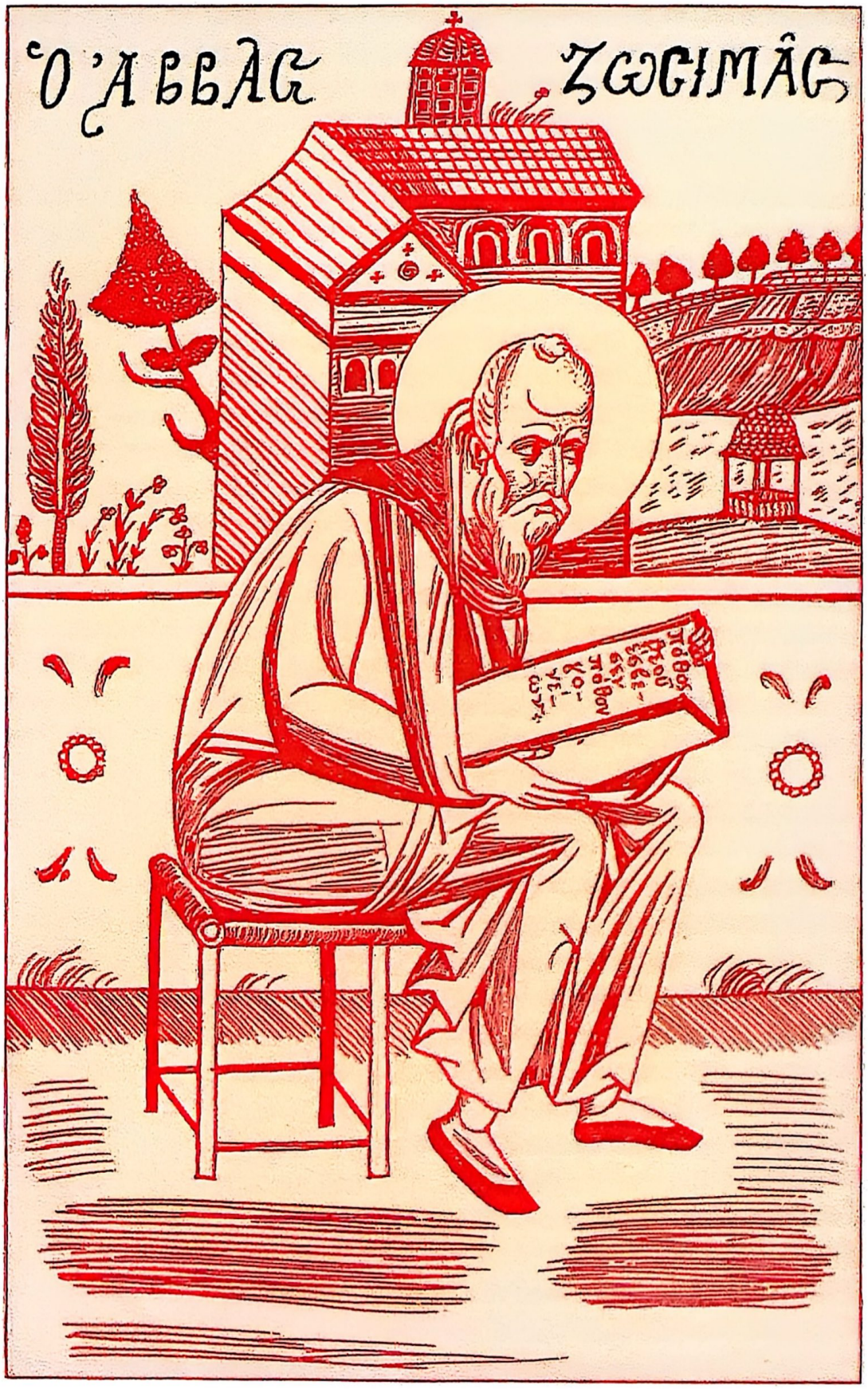
Once a certain novice monk went from the skete to the cœnobitic monastery of the Tabennesiotans. Nearly all of the monks of this monastery were holy men and were punctilious ascetics.

After thirty days, the novice monk went to the Archimandrite who headed the monastery and said to him: "Bless me and release me, Abba, for I cannot stay here." "Why, my child?" the Father asked. "Because," the novice monk replied, "here there is neither toil nor reward for me. Since the Fathers here are all strugglers, while I am a sinful man, I prefer to go where I can find men who will insult me and show me scorn, for these are the things which save a sinful man." On hearing this, the Elder was astonished, and knowing that the novice was in truth a doer of the commandments of God, he released him, saying to him: "Go, my child, so as to empower and strengthen your heart and to persevere in the Lord."

K. From Abba Zosimas

1. Abba Zosimas said: "Of many kinds are the effects of our intentions. It is possible for an ardent spirit to find with God, in a single moment, favor that another spirit, if it is cold and lax, cannot find in a period of fifty years. Thus, for example, if the demons see that someone has been insulted, belittled, and hurt, or has suffered some similar thing, and is upset, not because he suffered something bad, but because he failed to endure this temptation with courage and without feeling sorrow—such a spiritual disposition the demons greatly fear. For they know that this man has found the way of truth and wishes to walk in accord with the commandments of God."

2. Another time, the same Abba said, "If one brings to mind someone who has caused him upset, ridiculed him, hurt him, or has in any way caused him some evil, he should think of him as a physician and from the depths of his heart thank him for these things. If, however, he entertains in his mind thoughts against such a person, then he is giving



Abba Zosimas

thought, like the demons, to something contrary to his soul. Indeed, he becomes a demon himself and his own enemy, since he does not wish to be released from this evil, but to continue uncured. For if he were not ill, he would not be occupied with feelings against the person who made him sad and upset him and whom Christ sent to him as a physician to reveal his illness through assault and injury.

"If, indeed, he truly wishes to be cured, it is to his benefit to consider the person who troubled him his benefactor and to accept all the evil things coming from that person as therapeutic medicines that have been sent to him by Jesus—and to be thankful for these things, even if for the moment they may cause him sadness. For an ill man is not happy when he has an operation, or undergoes cauterization, or takes a cathartic. Indeed, quite the opposite: he is unsettled even thinking about it. But when he convinces himself that, without these things, he is not going to be cured from his illness, he yields himself all the more to his physician, for he knows well that, after a little inconvenience, he can be delivered from even the most bothersome chronic disease."

3. Evagrios also said: "I do not condemn those who speak ill of me. Instead, I call them my benefactors, and I do not turn away the Physician of souls when He offers degradation as a medicine to the conceited soul. I fear lest it might be said of my own soul by the spirit of God: 'We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed' (Jeremiah 51:9). Since, then, our Lord is good, He has given to us holy commandments, analogous with our evils, which expunge our evils by cauterization and purgatives. It is, indeed, impossible for us to be delivered from our sickness in any other way, save by proper and appropriate therapies."

4. Another time, the same Father said, "No one speaks falsely, except for him who praises and blesses me; and no one tells the truth, except for those who condemn me and insult me. And the latter do not tell the whole truth, since they do not know the hidden things of my heart. If they were to acquire the ability to know—let me not say all, but just a small part of—my evil deeds, surely they would dismiss me as slime, a foul odor, or an evil spirit. And even if the whole body of mankind were to become tongues, so as to accuse me for my shortcomings, it would not be possible to describe, to the extent deserved, my disgrace.

"For, if the righteous Job said, 'I am filled with disgrace' (Job 10:15), and he was to no great extent so 'filled,' what can I say, who am an entire sea of every evil? The Devil has lowered us down to every kind of

sin. Do we not have a responsibility, then, to know that we have been so debased? Those who know themselves well shatter Satan, who shattered them. As the Fathers have said, when his humility reaches down to Hell, the humble man is raised up to the Heavens; just as, on the contrary, when pride reaches up to the Heavens, the prideful man is hurled down to Hell."

And this Father says in conclusion, "Who can force a humble man to bring into his mind thoughts against anyone? For whatever grief a humble man suffers or hears about, he takes it as an opportunity to demean and to deride himself, as Abba Moses did; that is, when the clergy once threw him out of the Holy Altar and insulted him, he insulted himself even more strongly than they had insulted him.• And if someone should succeed in upsetting a humble man by an attack or injustice visited upon him, he immediately takes refuge in prayer, by which he quickly soothes his heart. And not this alone; but, at the very moment that he becomes upset, he vehemently censures himself, continuously checking himself and saying to his soul: 'Why, my wretched soul, are you acting crazy? Why have you become upset, like those who foam at the mouth? With precisely this upset you show that you are ill; for, if you were not ill, you would not have felt pain. Why, hapless soul, have you forsaken self-reproach for the condemnation of your brother, since it was he who revealed your illness, which was hidden within you and of which you were ignorant until now?'

"Imitate Christ, Who, when He was mocked, did not retaliate with ridicule, being unmenacing at what He suffered at the hands of the Pharisees and high priests. Listen to what is to be said and put it into practice: 'I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting' (Isaiah 50:6). And you, wretch, because of one attack, sit and concoct numberless thoughts against your brother (who benefited you by a small blow against your self-respect), not understanding that, like the demons, you thus cause harm to yourself. For what more harm can the demons do to you than the injury that you have brought on yourself, thoughtless and ill-fated as you are?"

And the Elder [Zosimas—*Trans.*] adds to his conclusion: "Let us look upon the Cross of Christ, and let us each day reflect on the Passions which He suffered for us. Yet we cannot endure the least attack. Indeed, we have deviated from the strait path."

5. He also said this: "If one were to live as many years as Mathuse-

lah,•• and yet did not walk that same path on which all of the Saints proceeded—that is, the path of accepting dishonor and hurt and enduring them calmly—he will not progress in any good thing but will merely pass his years aimlessly."

6. Another time, he said: "A brother once asked me: 'Abba, the commands of Christ are many, and I become confused in my mind and cannot retain them all. Tell me, then, what am I to do?' To this, I responded: 'My brother, do not be upset by this, but simply reflect on the following and adhere to it as much as you can; that is, endure all that befalls you with thankfulness, and in this way you will easily attain to all of the virtues. For what labor is there in praying for those who grieve you? Is it perhaps like digging in the earth? Or running a race? Or crossing the sea? Or suffering an economic loss?

"'So, feel gratitude when you are derided, becoming a disciple of the Holy Apostles, who held forth in joy, being made worthy of disgrace in the name of Christ. Moreover, they were scorned for the name of Christ in their purity, whereas we deserve to be disgraced by virtue of our sins. For even if someone does not touch our honor, we are unworthy and damnable. Because—as it is said—"cursed are they which do err from thy commandments" (Psalm 118:21). Not all are capable of being disgraced for the name of Christ, but only the Saints and the pure, as I said. That which we can do is endure with gratitude the attack and insults which are directed at us and acknowledge that we are justly ridiculed for our pitiable works.

"'But that wretched soul which, though acknowledging its impure deeds and the fact that it justly suffers what befalls it, nonetheless falls and misleads its conscience, hatching thoughts against its brother (saying, "You said something to insult me and spoke badly of me") and being stubbornly insensible, foolish, and rash, comes to hate itself and accomplishes the work of the demons.

"'Just as, in the instance of artists, a craftsman teaches a skill to an apprentice and can leave him, thereafter, to work on his own, not having to stay by him constantly to guide him, but simply looking in on him at intervals, lest he become lax in his work or somehow ruin part of his artwork, so precisely do the demons operate; if they see that a soul easily submits to them and easily entertains evil thoughts, they teach it their Satanic art, that is, their cunning and their evil, and have no further need of remaining near it, knowing that it can adequately come to destruction and be lost on its own. They visit it only from time

to time, to see that it has not become negligent in the work which they have assigned it.'"

7. Another time, Elder Zosimas said, "Is there any easier thing than to love everyone and to be loved by everyone? What rest is not to be had in the commandments of God? But we are not inclined by intention to those commandments; for if we were so inclined, then, by the Grace of God, all things would be easy for the soul, so that the slightest act of will would bring the aid of God to us, as I have often said. Virtue requires nothing more than our will, as the Divine Anthony said, and there is no need for toil, for all acts in synergy with Grace. What rest, then, do the quiet and humble not have? Indeed, '...the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace' (Psalm 36:11)."

8. The same Abba Zosimas told us: "A certain brother, having stayed with me and, after much effort, becoming learned in the monastic estate (for he was spoiled and required much care and understanding, because of this weakness of his), received from me the monastic habit. Now, one day he said to me: 'Abba, I love you greatly.' I replied to him: 'I have yet to find any person who can love me as I love him. Now you say, "I have love for you," and I trust you; however, if something should happen to displease you, you will not remain the same. I, however, whatever I might endure from you, will remain the same to you, and nothing could possibly distance me from your love.'

"Indeed, a little time passed. I did not know what had happened to him (for he was no longer living with me), but he began to speak many fearful things against me—even shocking things. I, on learning all that he was saying against me, said within myself: 'He is the cauterizing iron of Jesus and was sent to cure my vainglorious soul: he is, indeed, my benefactor.' And I looked at him as though he were a physician and benefactor, praying sincerely for him. And to him who related to me all that had been said against me I answered: 'The brother knows my visible shortcomings, and not all of these, but only the most insignificant. And he is telling only those that he knows, for those which have escaped his attention and remain hidden are numberless.'

"Then, after a time, this brother encountered me in Cæsarea.••• He approached and, as was his custom, embraced and warmly kissed me. And I also did the same, as though nothing had happened. And this happened not just once, but many times. That is, even though he had

said such things against me, when he met me, he embraced me warmly; and I embraced him without giving him any hint—or showing him a trace—of grief, even though, as I said, nothing of what he had said against me had escaped my ears.

"After all of this, it so happened that one day, when he encountered me, having run up to me as usual to embrace me, he fell at my feet and, taking hold of them, said to me: 'Forgive me, Abba, for the love of Christ, for I have said many fearful things against you.' I, then, raising him up and kissing him, said to him graciously: 'Do you remember, beloved of God, that when you said, "I love you very much," I told you that I have yet to find any person who can love me as I love him? You know the rest of what I told you, too. Let me tell you, then, that nothing of what you said against me was lost on me. I heard all that you said, to whom you said it, and where it was said. But I never said that what the brother said was untrue; nor did anyone entice me into saying a bad word about you. Rather, I said to those who related to me your aspersions that what you had said was true and that you said these things out of love, to befriend me, and that I did not once neglect to remember you in my prayers. The following is also proof of the love which I have for you: I once suffered terribly from a pain in my eye. But, immediately, upon bringing you to mind, I made the sign of the Cross and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, by the prayers of this brother, make me well." And immediately I was cured.'

"From that time forward, the brother in question placed absolute faith in me, ceased slandering me, and lovingly showed me great honor."

The Elder concluded: "We know neither how to be loved nor to receive honor, but have forsaken prudence. For if someone is patient with his brother, when the latter becomes angry by virtue of some Satanic influence and turns against him, the brother will shortly come to his senses. Thus, when he comes to see the wronged brother's forbearance and understands the patience that he has shown him, he is exceedingly grateful and is so overcome by the brother's powerful love for him, that he is ready to sacrifice himself for his sake."

9. He further related the following about a certain Elder: "This Elder," he said, "was very gentle; and on account of his virtue and the many miracles which he had performed, he was respected by everyone in the region where he lived. Now, once a certain brother who lived very near him, and whom the Elder had on many occasions served as his

guide to God, out of Satanic influence spoke insultingly of him in front of a group of others who happened to be with the Elder. The Elder simply stopped and, taking care for his words, said to him: 'Brother, the Grace of God is in your words.' And though the brother spewed forth more insults, saying, 'Yes, you miserable wretch and sluggard, you—you say all of this to show how gentle you are,' the Elder replied, 'Indeed, brother, all that you say is true.'

"Afterwards, one of the people who was present during this episode said to the Elder: 'Monk, were you really not upset at this?' 'No,' the Elder answered, 'I felt that way in my soul, as though Christ were protecting me.' In fact, one should be thankful to those who involve him in such episodes, as I often say, and should consider them, whether one feels unmoved *or* spiteful, physicians who are curing the wounds of his soul and who make it easier for him to gain the Kingdom of Heaven."

10. An Elder said: "If we are children of the Holy Apostles—as the Apostle Paul proclaims and tells us: 'For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel' (I Corinthians 4:15)—then we are obligated, as children, to imitate our parents. And just as the Apostles experienced joy when they were beaten and remained unperturbed when they were slandered (since it was said by Gentile and Jew, alike, that they were turning the world upside down with their magic and potions), so should we also feel in similar circumstances. The Apostles, in all of these and like things, not only were not grieved but, on the contrary, were taken with joy. So it is that they said with satisfaction: 'Being reviled, we bless; ...being defamed, we entreat' (I Corinthians 4:12-13), and other things. And this was all written that we might also imitate them. Therefore, when we suffer such things and hear bitter words, we should be joyful, as though we have gained a treasure, and share in the trials and tribulations of the Holy Apostles and Martyrs; and we should await yet greater things, showing that we are their true kinsmen and gaining even more notably by becoming partakers of the unending glory of the heavens."

11. Once a brother was presented to Abba Anthony. When Anthony approached him, he tested him, to see if he could endure attacks against his honor. And when he understood that he could not endure them, the Abba said: "You resemble a village which, while all decorated on the outside, behind the scenes is being plundered by thieves."

12. It was said of a certain Elder who was living in the hinterland that he lived in ascetic quietude. He was served by a layman who had a son. It so happened that the layman's son became ill, and the layman entreated the Elder to go to pray over his ill son.

Thereupon, the Elder left his cell, together with the layman. Now, the layman ran ahead and went to his house. He quickly gathered his relatives and neighbors, and said to them: "Come, let us go to meet the anchorite."

Immediately a great number of people came running. As soon as the Elder saw them coming from a distance with their lamps, he understood what was happening. So, he took off his clothes and started washing them in the river, standing stark naked.

When the layman who served him saw him thus, he was humiliated. He asked the people to return to their homes, "since the Elder," as he told them, "has lost his mind." Approaching the Elder, he said: "Why, Abba, did you do this, causing scandal to everyone? Because everyone who saw you said, 'The Elder is demonized.'"

To this, the Abba replied: "And that is just what I wanted to hear."

* Ἀγκών (or Ankon) is a city in Italy, on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, established by Greeks from Sicily *circa* 394 B.C. It is called "Ancona" by the Italians, today, and has about 85,000 inhabitants. The main Church of the city is St. Stephen's, built on the Capodimonte, a famous Christian shrine. According to a tradition mentioned by St. Augustine, the Church was built on a rock from those which were hurled at the Protomartyr Stephen during his stoning by the Jews. A certain pious man, who was present at the stoning, brought this rock from Jerusalem; he became a Christian apostle in Ancona.

** After the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Apostles, grieving together, drew lots for the place to which each would go forth to preach the Gospel of Christ. To John there fell the lot of Asia. However, since he accepted this with heaviness, by the Providence of God he was shipwrecked while travelling to Asia and his boat sank. However, the passengers, among whom was Prochoros, the disciple of the Holy Apostle, were saved by Divine Grace and carried by the waves to dry land. Of all the castaways, only the Divine John suffered to any extent, having remained for nearly forty days and nights in the sea, thrashed by the waves.

Regarding the facts of this shipwreck, as well as the subsequent events herein cited regarding Romana, etc., those wishing more extensive information should see *The Voyages of the Holy, Glorious Apostle and Evangelist John* in the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Volume IX, pp. 556-623.

*** The *"litra"* [plural, *"litrai"—Trans.*] is a measure of weight from the Roman era and equal to about three hundred twenty modern-day grams. The *obolos* [plural, *"oboloi"—Trans.*] was about one-sixth of an ancient *drachma* and had a value equal to about one and one half ounces of silver today. That is, the *obolos* was the least in value of ancient coins.

**** Calcium nitrate is a mineral which, in the countries in question, was mixed with oil to make a kind of soap.

***** The reference, here, is to the Archbishop of Alexandria, who, since the third century A.D., also bears the title "Pope." The use of the title "Patriarch" is of later origin (fifth century).

• [See pp. 30-31 in the present book—*Trans.*]

•• Mathuselah, a figure in the Old Testament, lived longer than any other man on earth, reaching the age of nine hundred sixty-nine years (Genesis 5:25). He indeed surpassed Adam himself, the first-created, who lived nine hundred thirty years.

••• Cæsarea was a large city in Cappadocia, and its capital. It became known to the Christian peoples, since it was the birthplace of St. Basil. It is located northeast of Ancyra, from which it is two hundred fifty-six kilometers distant. It is situated at an altitude of 1,095 meters above sea level on the northern foothills of the dormant volcano of Mt. Argaios [Erciyas Dagi, in Turkish—*Trans.*]. This is a famous mountain of molten rock in Cappadocia and the highest in Asia Minor (4,000 meters). Indeed, it is said that when the weather is clear, one can see the Black Sea and the Mediterranean from its peak.

Hypothesis III

That one should not be idle, but undertake physical labor, too; and that idleness is the cause of many ills.

A. From Palladios

It is said that, as he was approaching death, the holy Pambo said to the Holy Fathers who were present: "From the time that I came to this desert and constructed my cell and settled here, I spent not a single day without doing my handiwork; nor do I recall ever eating bread given to me by someone else."

2. From the Same Author

I was at one time in Galatia,* where I stayed for some time with His Grace, Bishop Philoromos, an extremely ascetic and very patient man. St. Gregory the Great was very taken by him, gratified as he was by the man's austerity and the care which he showed in his work. Even now, at eighty years of age, he has not put aside his pen or his calligraphy book. This blessed man said: "From the time that I was Baptized to this very hour, I have never eaten bread that was given to me by another person; instead, from what I make toiling at my handiwork, I give twenty coins to the lepers."

He went by foot to venerate the tombs of the Holy Apostles in Rome, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. He made this journey twice, paying his own expenses, in order to venerate the Saints and receive their blessings. He also told us this, for our benefit: "I cannot recall ever having taken my mind off of God."

3. From the Same Author

On Mount Nitria,** there is a large Church; near it a guest house was built. In this guest house, hospitality was offered throughout the year to any stranger who wished to stay close to the monks, and no one was evicted, if he did not wish to leave on his own. Guests were allowed to stay for one week without working; afterwards, however, they were

assigned to work, whether in the garden, the bakery, or the kitchen, or were given books to study; and they were not permitted to interact with anyone until the sixth hour. And all of them wove linen cloth by hand, so as not to be a burden on anyone.

B. From the Life of St. Evthymios

St. Evthymios the Great told his disciples that those who forsake the world and worldly things must take care to be obedient and humble, not to follow their own wills, and to endure at all times any weariness that might arise from their handiwork and labors; and the latter, above all, if one is young and is thus strongly confronted by fleshly assaults, on account of his age. Now, aside from great caution, it is needful, beyond this, for one to exhaust his body with great hardships, so as to yield easily to what is sensible and to extinguish, little by little, the flame of youth, and thus to imitate the Apostle Paul, while, at the same time, applying his precepts: not simply avoiding the sin of inactivity, by which an idler is judged unworthy of his very food—because, he says, "If any would not work, neither should he eat"—but acquiring the same hands as Paul: "These hands," he says, "have ministered unto my necessities and to those of them that were with me."***

For it is most unseemly that, while laymen not only feed themselves by their work—and, as well, their wives, their children, and their whole household—and pay their yearly taxes, but also offer to God the first-fruits of their labors,**** giving alms, in accordance with their ability, we should not be able to share in common with others the fruit of *our* work.

C. From the Life of St. Savvas

When the great Father Savvas was yet a young man and was living in the Monastery of Flavianæ, his hands were never idle. Whenever they were not lifted up towards God, then noetic prayer was his labor, out of fear that, at even the slightest interruption in mental concentration, the Enemy might secretly distract him and make his appearance. Thus, for him virtue was lighter than a feather, and he served all of the brotherhood, numbering about seventy monks, with obedience, humility, and all of the other Evangelical accomplishments. Later, having departed from there at the will of the Superior, who gave him a blessing to leave, he went to Jerusalem, where he met St. Evthymios the Great, who, as

was his custom, was present at the gathering of the monks. Savvas, falling at his feet, tearfully begged, entreated, and implored the Saint that he might also become one of his rational sheep and be shepherded by him, along with the other monks.

St. Evthymios the Great, who was a superb instructor to his sheep, having, furthermore, acquired experience over the years from their struggles, did not allow him to reside with the others in the monastery. For he saw that Savvas was still young and thought that perhaps his desire was just the result of some temporary impetuosity and lacked the seriousness of deep reflection. Thus, he allowed him to participate in the whole of the monastic life, exactly as it is prescribed, but outside the monastery. But even after this period of testing, he said:

"My child, it is not seemly, because of your age, that you should live within the monastery. This is neither beneficial to the monastery nor does it do you any good. But if you wish to heed my advice, place yourself in submission to Abba Theoktistos—to whom I am, of course, very close—in the institution just below us, and you will prosper greatly."

The Blessed Savvas was obedient to all of this, because, aside from other things, he had learned obedience; moreover, he promised with great eagerness to fulfill what St. Evthymios had instructed him to do.

"For this is what I want," Savvas answered, "and it is for this reason that I took refuge with you: that I might, by your aid, be saved."

St. Evthymios thus sent him to the Blessed Theoktistos and ordered the latter to look after him well. "Because," he said, "I have seen that the Grace of the Spirit is pouring out over Savvas richly and that, before a great period of time shall pass, the whole universe will be overwhelmed by his fame." This, of course, eventually happened, in fulfillment of St. Evthymios the Great's prediction.

So, this Divine Savvas, becoming a disciple of the Blessed Theoktistos, gave himself over with complete sincerity to God and was overcome wholly by Divine desire. And knowing that he was of a dual composition (that is, made up of soul and body), he set forth to double his asceticism: sometimes racking the body, sometimes the soul. Thus, he passed his day with bodily labors, while at night he kept vigil with prayers. Sometimes he would haul water, and at other times he would carry wood, and in this way, in his assiduity, he surpassed all of the others, whatever their obedience. For he was distinguished for his gallantry of soul; and he was also noble of body and truly robust. On his own, he undertook other obediences; in fact, he assumed the care of the mules. Despite this, he went before everyone else to the gatherings in the

Church and left last, eagerly taking part in the Divine Liturgy. And by all of these things, he added to his life, as Divine capital, obedience and self-control. For this reason, his spiritual state invited amazement from the vast array of monastics, that at such a young age he was adorned with the crown of the virtues and perfection.

D. From the Life of St. Loukianos the Hieromartyr

St. Loukianos the Great, even when he was still young, leaned towards the monastic life. Thus, very early on he turned away from all of the fleshly pleasures and gave himself over to fasting and unceasing prayer. In this way, within a short time he succeeded in rendering his flesh such that it did not trouble him. He busied himself with tachygraphy [stenography], and whatever he earned from this work he used for his food and for alms to the poor. For he thought it wrong if he tasted of his own food without the poor first taking their part out of what he had earned.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Ammoes and Abba Bitimios once visited Abba Achillas. It was very early, and they found him working, plaiting rope. They asked him to direct a few beneficial words to them, and he replied:

"Since yesterday evening up to this time, I have been plaiting rope at full pace, though, in fact, I do not need to do so much work. However, I am working thus, lest God find it necessary to chastise me, saying, 'Why, despite the fact that you are able, do you not work?' Therefore, I labor with all of my strength."

The Fathers were benefited by these words and departed.

2. A certain brother went to Mt. Sinai to visit Abba Silouan. Seeing the brothers there working, he said to the Elder:

"Labor not for the food which perisheth: for 'Mary hath chosen that good part' (St. Luke 10:42)."

Instead of responding, the Elder said to his disciple, Zacharias: "Give the brother a book and take him to his cell, where he is to have nothing." The brother, of course, did this.

Now, when the ninth hour was approaching, the visiting brother continually had nothing but the door on his mind: "Maybe they are sending someone to call me to eat."

St. Loukianos the Hieromartyr

However, after an hour had passed, and no one had called him, he got up, went to the Abba, and said:

"Did the brothers not eat today, Abba?"

"Of course," the Elder answered.

"Then why did they not call me?" the brother asked.

"Since you are a spiritual man," the Elder replied, "you have no need of such food; since we, however, are fleshly men, we want to eat, and therefore we work. You, however, have chosen the better part. You studied all day and do not now need to eat fleshly food."

The visiting brother, on hearing these things, made a prostration to the Elder and said:

"Forgive me, Abba."

And the Elder responded to him:

"In any case, Mary has need of Martha, too, since it was on Martha's account that Mary was praised."*****

3. A certain monk worked on the Feast Day devoted to the memory of a Martyr. On seeing this, another monk said to him:

"Is it permissible to work today?"

And the former answered him:

"On a day like this the servant of God was torn to pieces, tortured, and withstood martyrdom; yet I should not work at such a menial task?"

4. Someone once asked an Elder, who was plaiting a rope and did not even lift up his head from his handiwork, "What should I do to be saved?"

And he answered:

"Behold; just what you see."

5. Another Elder went to the side of a river, where he found a thicket of cane. He sat down, cut away stalks from the bank, plaited some of them into rope, and then threw the ropes into the river. He did this until others came and saw him. He then immediately got up and went his way.

He was not working because he had to, but to be occupied and so that his thoughts might remain at peace.

6. An Elder said: "When you get up in the morning, say to yourself: 'Work, body, to nourish yourself; soul, take vigilant care, so as to inherit

eternal life.'"

7. The following incident is told of Abba John the Short: Once, when he was young, he told his senior brother: "I would like to be carefree, just like the Angels, who do not toil but continually worship God." And taking up his monastic mantle, he left for the desert. He stayed there for a week and returned to his brother.

When he knocked at the door, his brother heard him from inside, but said, before opening it:

"Who is it?"

"I am John, your brother," he replied.

"John became an Angel and is no longer found among men," his brother answered from within.

But he persisted and begged: "It is I," he said. Despite this, his brother did not open the door to him, but left him to brood until morning.

After this test, the brother opened the door and said to him: "You are a man and you still need to work to earn your keep."

So, John made a prostration to his brother and said to him: "Forgive me."

8. An Elder said: "The sluggard and one who does not wish to work God does not want."

F. From St. Ephraim

Brother, do not be negligent in your handiwork; for often your mind will give birth to the thought that you will supposedly not be able to learn some craft. "You are," it will tell you, "weak and lazy, and you are unable to withstand the pain that it takes to carry out this work. Look, every part of your body aches from fatigue, because you are not used to being exhausted. So, get up and go back to where you were. And there," your mind tells you, "if you but fear God, you will be saved."

Now, do not be conquered by such thoughts, but be patient with the Lord, Who called you to His Kingdom. For He has told us, "In patience possess ye your souls" (St. Luke 21:19), and, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (St. Matthew 17:20). So, my beloved, let us be patient, for we place our hope not in man, but in God, Who saves all those who hope on Him.

Perhaps, beloved, one has no need to endure struggles in order to learn to read and write? If you learn a worldly trade, will you not likewise have to endure toil? If, then, you endure for *these things* with long-suffering, is it not fitting that you should have to withstand *all things for the sake of the Lord?* For even the Scripture says: "Thou shalt eat the fruit of thy labors; blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee" (Psalm 127:2). And the Apostle exhorts us: "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good," so that not just the laborer will have to eat, but "that he may have to give him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). Thus, he who hates work is not upright, for idleness manifests much evil, while he who loves works tastes of no sorrow.

Beloved brother, if you should choose piety for yourself, take care, lest, under the guise of piety, the Evil One should put in your mind an alien thought; that is, the vain or prideful thought that you need not labor along with your brothers, so as supposedly not to imperil your piety. On the contrary, work, like your soul-mates, and take care for your piety. For idleness destroys piety, and to those who embrace it, it gives a shameful name. Therefore, combine piety and your interest in work, and you will then be truly pious.

Beloved, if you are toiling in the monastery and you become more fatigued than the others, be careful, so that the Evil One does not secretly bring about thoughts in you that are filled with deadly bitterness, such that you say to yourself, "I am carrying out work that is worth a great salary, and yet my food is nothing," and thus ask for more, or different, food than the other brothers, and therefore for the sake of food annul the work you have done for God. For if you think about such things, you are not walking in accord with love. Whenever you ask your reward from men, you lose that of God.

Now, since you await your recompense from Him, do not desire those things which are offered to you by men. It is better to humble yourself before your brothers and be joyful, anticipating rewards that will be given by the Just Judge, Who will give to each his reward according to his works and Who said in this respect: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods" (St. Matthew 24:45-47).

I also know a brother who said: "I will pray to God to give His blessing to my handiwork, so that the monastery might be supported by it; for this would give me great joy, and I would thank God all the more,

Who said: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me' (St. Matthew: 25:40)."

Yet another brother toiled greatly in the monastery and, on account of this labor, suffered greatly from temptations. He, however, answered these thoughts of his with the following words: "You cantankerous servant, you have been warred against; what more can you do?" So, the Lord granted him comfort and gave him courage.

Blessed is the monk who keeps the commandments of the Lord and continually attends to the following three: devotion in prayer, work, and study. For the Holy Scripture says: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 45:11); and again, "I am poor and in troubles from my youth up" (Psalm 87:16); and finally, "And in His law shall he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Beloved, if you are living in a cœnobitic monastery with brothers, be of humble mind, serving your brothers in all things, such that your good behavior also leads to what is good in those who find themselves in the monastery after their formerly wretched lives. When they shall see you so, they too will come to prepare their souls for the work of the commandments. Therefore, when the Superiors order that you submit to some work together with the brothers, eagerly run and do not wait for another to get there before you. Neither have dealings with those who are lazy, who damage themselves by their laziness and who are thus greatly injured. First of all, they are worthy of condemnation for their disobedience, selfishness, and sluggishness; besides this, they lose any reward for their labors; and thirdly, and more importantly, they give reason to others for complaining, backbiting, and disobedience. They will render an account to God, Who will judge them for the spiritual damage done to others.

You, then, brother, must pay them no heed; for no one ever says at harvest time: "Since my neighbor is not reaping wheat for himself, neither will I reap wheat for myself." But on the contrary, every person, whenever he has the time, gathers food for himself and for his animals, so as not to be in need when winter comes. If, then, we take such care for the things of the flesh, should we not, all the more, pay attention to spiritual things? If, again, you are ill in body and cannot work like those who labor in the fields, sincerely show your best intention, and those who see your illness and your weakness will lighten your load. Nevertheless, do not allow them to take the whole burden from you, but entreat them with the words: "But I want to do my part along with you." And work with them, with all the power that the Lord has given you,

and thus gain great recompense from God.

G. From Abba Isaiah

Brother, take care not to ignore your handiwork with the excuse that you are observing a commandment of God, but attend to it with the fear of God, so that you do not fall to sin without knowing it. When you are learning various handicrafts, express your doubts to the one who is showing them to you, but do not permit yourself to say continuously to him, "Brother, do me a favor and see if this is all right or not." If you are dwelling with another brother and he is doing some extra work, do some work yourself, taking part in his labor, so that your conscience is at peace and so as not to cause distress to your body. At no time, however, should you ask to learn about the handicraft of your brother—whether he does more work than you or you more than he. Occupy yourself exclusively with your own work, and the fear of God will dwell in your soul. For idleness is death and misleads the soul.

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios the Great once went to visit Abba Anthony on his mountain. When he arrived, he knocked on the door of his cell. So, Abba Anthony came out of his cell and said: "You—who are you?"

"I am Makarios," the visitor replied.

On hearing this, Abba Anthony went inside and, having closed the door, left Makarios outside. After some hours, seeing his patience, Anthony opened the door and said graciously: "After hearing of you, I have for a great deal of time wanted to meet you." And, indeed, he exhausted Father Makarios with his hospitality. When evening approached, Abba Anthony soaked *thallia,*• that is, young branches of palm, for his handiwork.

"Allow me to soak some, too," Abba Makarios said to him.

"Soak," Abba Anthony answered him.

And putting together a large bundle, he soaked them in water. They then sat down together the whole night, speaking about the salvation of the soul and plaiting; and their woven ropes reached from the opening of the cell down into the cave. As dawn broke on the cave, the Blessed Anthony saw the length of Abba Makarios' rope and said: "Great power comes forth from those hands."

2. The heresy of Messalianism•• does not allow its followers to labor. These heretics teach that one must pray continuously and despise work.

I. From St. Ephraim

O monk, do not offer as an excuse for idleness the fact that you are ill, for Holy Scripture says, "Thou hast given him his heart's desire" (Psalm 20:2).

Brothers, let us not scorn the Grace of God, which grants us the strength to work good; indeed, with this power let us work good and continually thank Christ. In Holy Scripture, it is written: "Labor not for food which perisheth, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life" (St. John 6:27). Make your hands to labor to do good, so that he who has need of bread will have it and so that your heart might be ceaselessly devoted to the Lord; for then you shall truly work for that nourishment which remains everlasting, and not for that nourishment which is lost together with the body. So, labor not to find rest—that is, so as to manage to live without work—because idleness betokens great evil.

* Galatia was a province in central Asia Minor. The Galatians settled it in the third century B.C. St. Paul visited Galatia and preached the Gospel there, during his second missionary journey. To the inhabitants of this province, who, as we noted, became Christians very early on, St. Paul addressed his Epistle to the Galatians.

** Nitria, which is one of the most renowned cradles of Christian asceticism, is a valley in Egypt, located about one hundred ten kilometers northwest of Cairo, towards the Libyan desert, and called by the Egyptians "Wadi el Natrun," that is, the "Natrun Valley." In this valley, there were around ten dry saline lakes (fed underground by the Nile River), which, when the river flooded, were filled with water, though during the rest of the year they were completely dry. In ancient times, large amounts of salt and calcium nitrate were taken from them during the flood season, for the better mining of which processing stations were built near the lakes to facilitate the fuller collection of the aforementioned products from them.

During the era of the First Œcumenical Synod (325 A.D.), Abba Ammonios the One-Eared, who is considered the first dweller in the area, established the nucleus of what were, thereafter, the famous establishments of Nitria, on account of the fact that more than five thousand monks, and quite a number of the great ascetics and Fathers, were monks in that region. Today there are many remnants from the ruins of these ancient hermitages in Nitria. There are also remnants of newer monasteries; and there are four functioning monasteries preserved to this day, though they are Coptic.

*** The Apostle Paul, as is well known, so as not to be a burden to the Christians, and in order to meet his living expenses, labored as a tent-maker (Acts 20:34; II Thessalonians 3:10-12; I Corinthians 4:12).

**** Things that are offered to God—chiefly from the fruits of the earth—even before men enjoy them are called "first-fruits." This custom is very ancient, dating from the pagan era, and it spread to all peoples. First-fruits were also required by Hebrew law.

In the New Testament, the term "first-fruits" simply means the beginning, or first fruits, of spiritual life in Christ. Our Lord, for example, is called "the first begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5), "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; *cf.* I Corinthians 15:20-23), and His Resurrection is the beginning and, at the same time, the guarantee of the resurrection of all the dead: "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive.... Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's" (I Corinthians 15:22-23).

The custom of first-fruits was maintained in Christian worship; there is a special prayer preserved in the *Euchologion* [a Priest's handbook, containing a collection of services and blessings—*Trans.*], coming from the first centuries of Christianity, with the title: "Prayer read over those offering the first-fruits of autumn." However, in order to safeguard the sacredness of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, already from the period of the Holy Apostles the Third and Fourth Apostolic Canons forbade honey, milk, strong drink, birds, any living things, or legumes, "with the exception of new sprouts of wheat [*chidra—Trans.*] and grapes at the appropriate season," to be offered on the altar ("*chidra*" was the name given to fresh grains of wheat, crushed and removed from the husk). In its Forty-fourth Canon, the Synod of Carthage repeated this prohibitory Canon with slight concessions. Finally, the Sixth Œcumenical Synod completely forbade the offering of first-fruits, except for new wheat and grapes, within the Holy Altar.

After these prohibitions, first-fruits were placed outside the Church or were sent to the homes of the Bishops and Priests; however, it has slowly become the custom, once again, to bring them into the Church, in front of the Altar (*Bema*), where the appropriate prayer is read and they are distributed to the Faithful as a blessing. In Greece, this custom is normally observed on the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6), when grapes are brought to the Church, blessed by the Priest, and distributed to the faithful.

***** The story of Martha and Mary is related in the Gospel episode in which Martha, the sister of Lazarus, welcomed Jesus, when the Lord went to their village—that of Bethany. Martha endeavored in every way to look after Jesus, while her sister Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to His teaching. Martha then complained to Jesus that her sister had left her alone to tire her out. Jesus said, in response, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her" (St. Luke 10:41-42).

• "*Thallia*" are the shoots of palm trees, which the Fathers used for producing rush mats, baskets, etc. They would first split these shoots, soak them in water, and then plait them into ropes or long strands. Since baskets ["*zempilia*" (singular, "*zempili*")—*Trans.*] were produced in this way, "*thalli*" [or "thallion"—*Trans.*] also came to mean basket [i.e., "*zempili*"—*Trans.*].

•• The heresy of the Messalians surfaced in the second half of the fourth century in Mesopotamia. Soon, however, it spread to Syria, Asia Minor, Thrace, and Egypt. The Messalians were inclined towards mysticism and asceticism, and for this reason they made a great impression on the monastic brotherhoods. The Messalians were indifferent when it came to religion, and they did not belong to any particular religious group. They had only a vague belief in one God, the Creator of the world, Whom they worshipped in their homes, which they called "prayer houses." They grew their hair long and lived together in mixed communities. They rejected work as evil and supported themselves through begging.

The Messalians spent their time in assiduous and continuous prayer, believing that man is saved in this way; they despised the Mysteries and Rites of the Church. The Messalians survived for many centuries, and in the eleventh century thriving Messalian communities still existed in Thrace.

In the fourteenth century, St. Gregory Palamas visited a Messalian monastery and, after much effort, succeeded in delivering many of the senior members of the community from their error.

Hypothesis IV

To what end a monk should work and for what amount of time, and what kind of work he should perform.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Once, several brothers visited a great Elder. The Elder asked the first brother:

"What work do you do, brother?"

"Abba, I plait ropes," he answered.

"May God weave a crown for you, my child."

Then he asked the second brother: "And you, what do you make?"

"Rush mats," he replied.

"God will strengthen you, my child."

In turn, the Elder asked the third brother: "And you, what work do you do?"

"I make sieves [woven from rushes—*Trans.*], my Elder."

"God will protect you, my child."

Afterwards, he likewise spoke to the fourth brother: "And what work do you do?"

"I am a calligrapher," he answered.

"You know what is needed," the Elder said in response to him.

Finally, he asked the fifth brother: "And at what do you work?"

"I weave linen cloth," the fifth brother replied.

"In such things I am not involved," the Elder responded.

With these answers, the Elder meant, specifically, the following: The brother who plaited ropes, if he took care, was weaving, together with God, a crown for himself. The brother who was making rush-mats needed strength, since his work was exhausting. He who was making sieves needed protection from God, since he sold them in the villages. The calligrapher had need of humbling his heart, for this art brings pride to those who are not vigilant. To the brother who wove linen fabric, the Elder said that he had no involvement, since this man was occupied by business pursuits and not with the handiwork appropriate to a monastic. For, if from afar one sees someone supporting himself by making baskets, rush mats, and sieves, he knows that this is a monastic, because

his handiwork is made from a plant and can be burned by fire. But when one beholds a fabric salesman, he says: "Here come the hawkers, since this is a worldly work and is not profitable for very many—monks, that is."

2. Abba John the Eunuch, when he was young, asked a certain Elder: "How is it that you can do the work of God with ease, while we, since we are overcome by fatigue, cannot do so?"

The Elder replied: "We can do this, since we place the work of God first in order and consider the satisfaction of bodily needs totally secondary; while you, on the contrary, give primary significance to the satisfaction of your bodily needs and reckon the work of God insignificant; and thus you get tired. For you do not reflect on the words that the Savior addressed to his Disciples: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God..., and all these things shall be added unto you' (St. Matthew 6:33)."

3. A brother questioned an Elder.

"What can I do," he said, "since I am upset on account of my handiwork? I try to plait ropes, but I cannot work."

The Elder answered him: "Abba Sisoes has said that we should not occupy ourselves with work that gives us rest and which pleases us."

4. A brother asked Abba Biare: "What can I do to be saved?"

The Elder answered him, "Go and make your stomach small and your handicraft little, and remain in your cell without agitation; then you will be saved. That is, live without worry, in moderation, and with self-control."

B. From St. Ephraim

Brother, look after yourself with all assiduity, for the evils of the Enemy are many and diverse, and he employs many ploys. Sometimes the Crafty One brings you sluggishness in your handicraft and attempts to draw you away from your work by disinterest, so that you will become involved in work which is not proper; and having drawn you out of your cell, he causes you to wander aimlessly here and there and to neglect your handiwork. Another time, should you resist him by patience and concentration, he will war with you in a different way; that is, he will inspire in you more eagerness in your work than you should indeed show, through greed and the love of material things, giving you

strength to work day and night at your work, so as to interfere, if possible, with your prayer and monastic services. He will induce you to go after everyone else to the gatherings of the monastics for services and to leave first, out of excessive concern for your work. Thus, little by little, he will govern you completely and make you once more a totally earthly creature. For, as Holy Scripture says, "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought into bondage" (II St. Peter 2:19).

Beloved, as soon as you sense, then, that the Evil One is undertaking to lead you astray, do not obey him, but do all things as they should be done, with moderation, laboring, too, in moderation, so that you are regularly in attendance at gatherings for services and prayer; and the blessing which will come to you through faith will give you strength and Grace in every good endeavor. Let us love temperance and let us only seek after that which is of absolute necessity and not after enjoyment. If we pursue enjoyment and avidity, then our toil shall be great, our path unsteady, our grief inconsolable, and our lives care-worn. There is need for but one thing, my brothers; as the Lord said: nothing is greater or more valuable than the soul. For this reason, let us seek and take care to make it ready. And let us not spend all of our time caring for the body.

When the body hungers and demands food, let us remember that the soul also has the same need. Just as the body, if it does not take food, cannot live, so the soul, if it does not partake of spiritual wisdom, is dead. Thus, the Savior says that "Man shall not live by bread alone" (St. Matthew 4:4). You, then, like a good manager, must give the food of the soul to the soul and the food of the body to the body. Do not let your soul die, but nourish it with Divine words, with Psalms and hymns and spiritual verse, with readings from Holy Scripture, with fasting, with vigils, with prayer, with tears, and with hope and thought for future good things.

These and things like them are the sustenance of the soul. Take care, brothers, that no one should find you barren; for the Apostle says, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). So, one who sows enjoyment, pleasures, and comfort in his flesh shall reap from the waste of the flesh. He who sows prayer, fasting, and vigils in his spirit, the same shall reap eternal life from the spirit. He who does not remain steadfast in his handiwork will find heartbreak in fruitless work. A slovenly man works on appointed days of rest and aimlessly wastes his time on workdays. To fail to observe the appointed day and remain indifferent is not a virtue; it is necessary to take heed and to set aside laziness. For, as it is said, "A sluggard when reproached is not

ashamed" (Proverbs 20:4).

C. From the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*

Let every believing man and every believing woman, having risen in the morning from sleep and having washed, pray; and if there is religious teaching to be had, let them prefer devout words to work.

Hypothesis V

That against which the brothers should take caution when they work together.

A. From Abba Isaiah

1. Brothers, if several of you go out together to do some special task as a group, let each of you pay attention to himself and not to his brother; that is to say, let one not inquire whether the other has done more work than he, or whether he, himself, has done more than his brother. And neither let him teach his brother or give him orders, even if he sees that he is not doing the work properly. Let him not say to him: "You have ruined this work," but leave him to do it as he wishes. But if he says, "Brother, do me a favor and show me how to do this work," then let the one teach the other with humility. If, however, the one who knows how to do it replies, "I do not know how," and does not teach his brother, he does not have the love of God in him but is an evil man; and he, again, who is not familiar with the work, let him not be embarrassed to keep saying to him who does know it, "Do me a favor: take a look and see if this is good."

2. If you are working together with others, and one of you causes some damage out of faint-heartedness, let no one reprimand him, but rather rejoice with him.

3. If you are working with someone who is sick, you should not compete with him by wanting to do more work than he.

4. If you are doing your handiwork, make every possible effort not to estimate what you have done or what your brother has done during the course of the week; for this manifests a lack of monastic formation.

5. If you go off with your brother to some special work, you should have no desire for others to learn that you have worked more than he; for every good deed that a man does in secret is that which God seeks from him.

6. If you undertake some task together with others, do not retain within yourself any deficiency which you see, or hear about, in others, while you are out, and do not let it reach your mouth, lest you tell it to your brothers; for if you are truly wise, this spells death for your soul.

B. From Abba Cassian

In all the cœnobitic monasteries of the East, and especially of Egypt, this rule prevails: as soon as the brothers have been dismissed from the monastic gathering, nobody dares to stand and talk with anyone else. Neither are monks permitted to depart from their cells nor to leave off the work that they have in their hands, in accordance with the Apostolic injunction (I Thessalonians 2:9), unless there is some need for them all to gather together to carry out some indispensable task. And this, in turn, is done with diligence and quietness, so that there is no conversation between them; rather each concentrates on the appointed Psalm and the work, and they thus complete the task in question. They are very careful to ensure that no one of the brothers ever remains alone with another, and particularly with a novice, or dares to stretch out his hand to grab or hold another's hand. If anyone transgresses this rule, he is subjected to a very severe penalty.

Hypothesis VI

That in a cœnobitic monastery no one should have any property of his own; for one who acquires anything, there is the danger that he will bring upon himself the severest punishment.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

When I was living in the monastery and he was also there, a certain monk by the name of Justus, who knew the art of healing, would look after me every day, since I was very frequently ill. He in turn fell sick, and was close to his end. His brother in the flesh, by the name of Copiosus, stood beside him and tended to him in his illness; this Copiosus is still alive to this day, and makes a living for himself by practicing medicine in this city.

Now, when the sick man realized that he was approaching his death, he revealed to his brother that he had hidden three gold coins; and, indeed, the brothers of the monastery, who made a detailed search of all his personal effects, found the three gold coins somewhere, there, and immediately reported this to me. As soon as I heard about such an evil concerning a brother who had lived with us in the common life, I could not endure it, for the rule of our monastery was such that all of the brothers should live together and hold all things in common, and that none should have anything of his own. I was overcome with great grief and thought about what I should do for the forgiveness of the sins of the dying man, and also for the edification of the remaining brothers, that they might fear such a thing.

I immediately summoned the Steward* of the monastery and told him: "Go and give the order that none of the brothers should approach the one who is dying, and that he not hear words of consolation from the mouth of any of them. When he is in the throes of death and calls the brothers to his side, then let his brother in the flesh tell him: 'Because of the three coins that you kept hidden, all of the brothers have turned away from you.' Perhaps at least in death he will condemn himself with bitter reproach, and the grief that he experiences will somehow cleanse him of the sin that he committed. When he dies, do not bury his body where the other brothers are buried, but open up a hole, somehow or

other, in the dung-heap and throw him in there. As for the three gold coins which he left, let them be thrown on top of the corpse while the brothers all say together: 'Thy money perish with thee' (Acts 8:20); and in this way cover him with soil."

Now, in a short time Justus reached the point of death, and since he was very distressed, he asked the brothers to come and stand beside him. But none of the monks approached him. Then his brother in the flesh told him why they had all turned away from him. Justus immediately uttered a loud groan over his sin, and with these sighs his soul departed from his body. They buried him as I had ordered. After this decision, all of the brothers were greatly disturbed, and each of them began to bring insignificant and very small items which the rule of the *cœnobion* did not allow them to have, since they were frightened, lest something be found among them for which they would be condemned.

Thirty days having passed since the man's death, my soul began to feel compassion for this dead brother, and I began to reflect with great pain on the punishments he was undergoing. I therefore sought some means of delivering him from his sin. Having summoned the Steward, I said to him with great austerity: "We have been sufficiently indifferent up to now concerning that brother. We are obligated for the sake of love to help him as much as we can. Go, then, and give the order that for thirty days hence, beginning today, Divine Liturgy should be celebrated continually for his soul."

The Steward did as we had agreed. As I said, the Redemptive Sacrifice was offered for the sake of his soul. While we were occupied with various other matters, and thus were not counting the passing days, the dead brother himself appeared to his brother in the flesh, Copiosus, one night. Copiosus at once asked him: "What condition are you in there?" The dead Justus replied: "Up to now I have been in a very bad way; but now I am well." Copiosus then went straight to the monastery and revealed the dream to us.

After we had reckoned up the days exactly, we found that it was on that day that the thirtieth Liturgy for the forgiveness of the sins of the dead brother had been celebrated.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "I want to enter and live in a communal monastery." Abba Poimen replied to him: "If you succeed in having no interest in any relationship or thing, then you can live the

cœnobitic life. For in a *cœnobion* you have no control over even a vessel containing water."

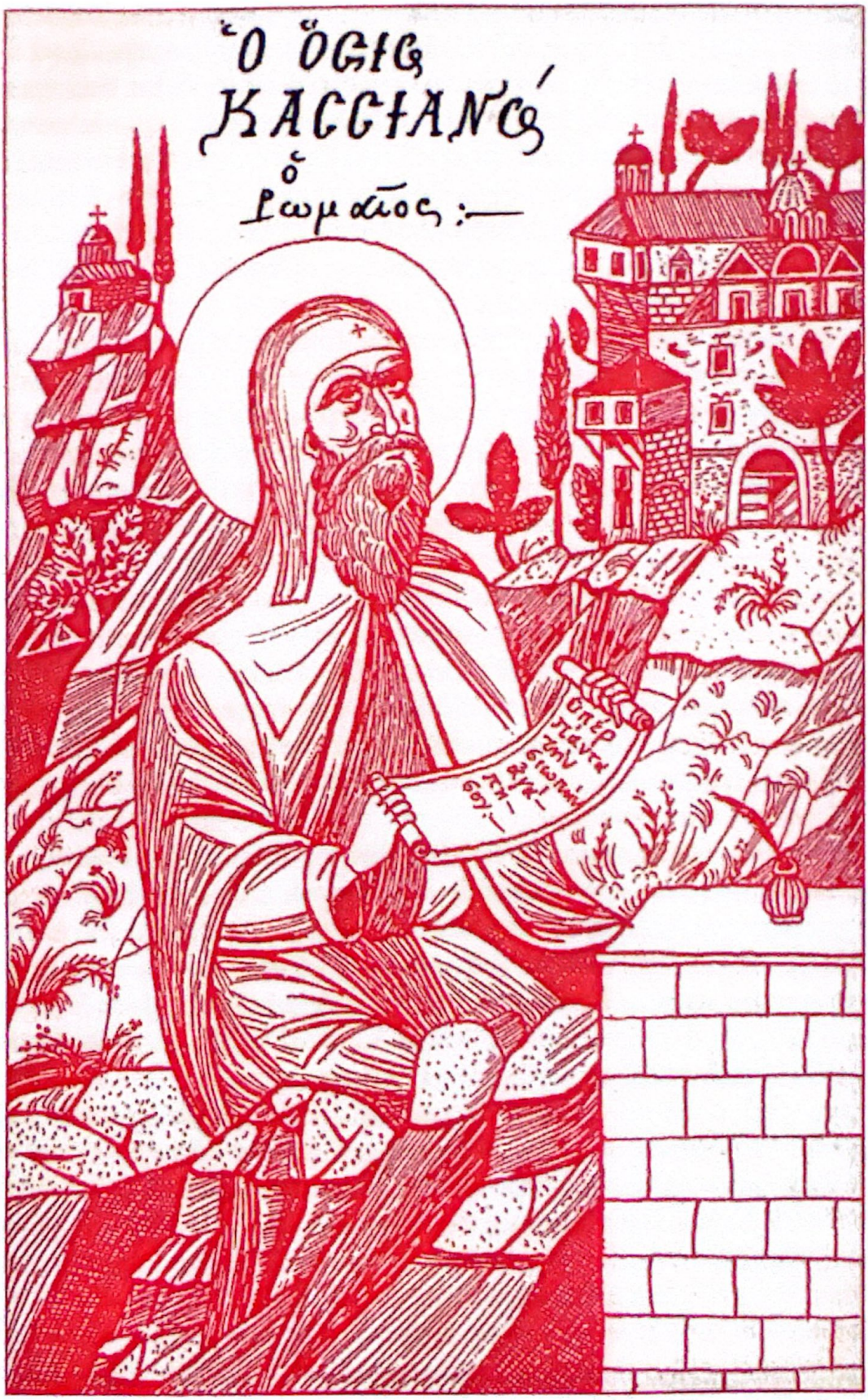
2. Once, Paisios, the brother of Abba Poimen, found a small box of *holokotina,*** and said to his brother, Abba Anoub: "You know how austerely Abba Poimen talks; come, let us establish a monastery somewhere else, and let the two of us remain there, without cares." "And how can we establish it?" asked Abba Anoub. Paisios then showed him the coins. As soon as Abba Anoub saw these, he was sorely distressed, for he thought of the harm his brother's soul might suffer from them. But he said to him: "Fine. Let us go and establish a cell on the other side of the river."

Abba Anoub took the box with the coins and put it under his monastic hat. As they were crossing the river and reached the middle of it, Abba Anoub pretended that he was dizzy, and his hat, with the coins, fell into the river. Abba Anoub feigned distress. Then Paisios said to him: "Do not be distressed, Abba; for, since the coins have been lost, we can return to our brother." They returned and lived in peace.

3. An Elder said: "Many monks distributed their money and abandoned father and mother, brothers and relatives, in order to be saved from their sins; and when they went to the monastery, they accomplished great virtues. But overcome by the smallest and most trivial things, they became playthings of the demons by acquiring sacks and boxes in which to keep fruits, nuts, needles, scissors, carving tools, and belts. On account of all of these items, they were censured by the prudent as being lovers of themselves; in accordance with Holy Scripture they "are sent as ones accursed into the outer darkness." For cursed is he who changes the boundaries of the Fathers. They will all be deemed worthy of the same lot as Ananias, Sapphira and Jannes,*** as followers and fellow-sharers of them.

C. From Abba Cassian

He who enters a monastery to become a monk, yet holds onto any of the things that he brought with him, cannot remain for a long time in obedience to the monastery and monastic discipline. Neither can he attain to the virtue of humility and submission, nor will he endure to the end in the poverty of the monastery. For whatever excuse or affliction torments his mind, immediately the hope that he has something of his own will thrust him out of the monastery, just as a sling hurls a rock. For



St. Cassian the Roman

the stimuli of the other passions (I mean, of anger and desire), as is well known, have their origin in our own bodies. In some way, the cause that provokes them is implanted and innate within us, and for this reason much time is needed for them to be subdued. However, the sickness of avarice, since it is caused from the outside, can more easily be cut off, if we make the effort and pray fervently. But when we neglect it, it becomes worse than the other passions and is uprooted with difficulty. For, as the Apostle says, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (I St. Timothy 6:10).

Now, when this passion finds a soul that is very lukewarm and without great faith, then—at the beginning of his obedience—it suggests to him various pretexts that appear plausible, according to his judgment, and supposed well-deserved rewards that accrue thereto, in order to make him hold onto one of those things that he possesses. That is to say, it makes the monk think about ripe old age and bodily illness, that the necessary provisions bestowed by the monastery are supposedly inadequate—not only for the infirm, but also even for the healthy; that here in the monastery, as much care as they deserve is not given to the sick, but that the care given is wholly neglectful. For this reason, if one does not have some money hidden away, he will die in a pitiable state. And finally, it inspires in such a monk the thought that he cannot remain in the monastery until his death, because of the hard toils and the strictness of the Abbot.

When the Devil, with such thoughts, succeeds in leading the wretched monk astray into secretly holding onto even a single penny, from there he persuades him to learn a handicraft without the knowledge of the Abbot, whereby he might be able to increase the money that is so important to him. Thereafter, the Devil deceives this poor fool with uncertain hopes that perhaps he will gain some profit from his handiwork and will thus enjoy respite and freedom from anxiety. After he has become spellbound with thoughts of gain, he no longer thinks of anything else: neither about flying into a rage, if he should happen at some point to suffer harm, nor about the darkness of distress, if, despite his hope, he does not make some gain. And just as in the case of others, whose belly becomes their god, so in his case, money becomes his god; for this reason he is considered to be an idolater, as the Apostle says (Colossians 3:5). For, after he has distanced his mind from the love of God, he transfers his love to human idols that are sculpted in gold.

With these thoughts, the monk becomes confused and goes from bad to worse; he is unable to have even the slightest humility or obedi-

ence. On the contrary, he becomes indignant and is constantly exasperated by this passion. He grumbles and objects to every task that he is assigned, and, since he no longer keeps any of the commandments, he has no piety at all. Hence, like a wild horse, he runs to the precipice; he is not satisfied even by his daily fare. He continually protests that he cannot endure all of these things to the end; and he proclaims that God is found not *solely* in the monastery and that the salvation of his soul is not confined to that place *alone*. He asserts, rather, that God exists everywhere for those who seek Him, and, in the end, that if he does not leave his monastery, he will be lost. And thus, since he has an accomplice in this sinful purpose of his—the hidden money—as if he has acquired wings with it, he plans his departure from the monastery, responds rudely and arrogantly to all commands, and considers himself entirely a stranger and an outsider.

If he sees anything in the monastery that needs to be corrected, he is indifferent to it and ignores it. He finds fault with everything that goes on in the monastery; and so, he looks for excuses to be angry and upset, so that it may not seem that he is leaving the supervision of the *cœnobion* recklessly and without cause. If he can deceive another monk with whisperings and vain words, and thus lure him away from the *cœnobion*, he does not omit to do this as well, since he wishes to have an accomplice in his sin. Kindled thus by the fire of money, he is unable to find stillness in the monastery or to live under any rule.

When the demon of greed, like a wolf, snatches him and separates him from the flock, having him ready to devour, he then throws him into another snare. I mean, the demon makes him carry out, now, with great eagerness in his cell, night and day, the work which the monk was assigned to do only at certain hours in the monastery, and which he used to neglect. Thus, he does not allow the monk to keep either his customary rule of prayer, or the sequence of fasts, or the rule of vigil. After binding him tightly with the passion of avarice, the demon persuades him to devote all of his attention to handiwork.

This passion of avarice manifests itself in three ways, which are equally forbidden by the Divine Scriptures and the teachings of the Fathers. One is that which we described above: It makes the unfortunate monks who are assailed by it attempt to acquire and accumulate things which they did not have even when they were in the world. Secondly, those who at one time renounced money are made to repent of this, and avarice suggests to their minds the thought of taking back that which they have dedicated to God. Thirdly, after clothing the monk at the out-

set with unbelief and lukewarmness, avarice does not let him separate himself completely from the cares of the world, but urges him to hold onto something—perhaps out of fear of poverty, as we said previously. therefore, avarice makes the monk not to believe in the Providence of God and causes him to transgress the very promises which he made when he renounced the world.

We find examples of these three forms of the passion of avarice condemned in Holy Scripture, as we noted before. When Gehazi**** wanted to acquire money, which he did not have, he lost the gift of prophecy, which his teacher wanted to leave to him as his legacy; and so instead of a blessing, by way of the Prophet's curse he inherited everlasting leprosy. Judas, again, because he was willing to take money, which he had previously lost when he followed Christ, was taken over by this passion, not only reaching the point of denying Christ the Master and falling away from the choir of the Apostles, but also of ending his earthly life by a violent death (St. Matthew 27:3-5). Finally, Ananias and Sapphira, by holding onto a few of those things that they had acquired, were punished by a death which the Apostle announced to them (Acts 5:1-11).

God puts forth in Deuteronomy, through Moses, a command to those who have renounced the world and who, by way of fear rising from unbelief, bind themselves again to earthly things. "If any man is very fearful and cowardly in his heart, he will not go out to war. Let him go and return to his own house, lest he make the hearts of his brothers fearful" (Deuteronomy 20:8).

He says this in order to instruct us that, when we renounce the world, we should renounce it completely and, in this way, go forth to war. And we should not impede others from Evangelical perfection by making a bad and feeble beginning and by causing them to be cowardly. If we do such, the words of St. Basil the Great will perhaps apply to us, which he said to a certain Senator who had renounced the world, but without great relish, and had retained some of his money: "You have lost the rank of Senator, and you have not yet succeeded in becoming a monk."

We must eradicate from our souls, then, the root of all evils, which is avarice. For we should be very well aware that, as long as the root remains, branches sprout easily. Besides, we should have before our eyes the fact that the moment of death is unknown, lest our Lord should come at a time when we are not awaiting Him and find our conscience sullied with avarice. Then He will say to us what was said in the Gospel

to the rich man: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (St. Luke 12:20). We should know that it is difficult for us to achieve this virtue unless we live in a *cœnobion;* for therein, we do not even think about these "absolutely necessary" things.

* The Steward ["*Oikonomos*"—*Trans.*] of a monastery is the monk who has been given the responsibility of purchasing, guarding, and managing everything that is needed for the monastery and its monks.

** *Holokotina* or *denarii* were gold or silver coins of the Roman and Byzantine periods.

*** Ananias was a Jew from Jerusalem, who became a Christian together with his wife, Sapphira. This man sold a field and, after retaining a portion of the money that he had collected, and this with the knowledge of his wife, handed over the remainder to the Apostles. St. Peter, however, learning the truth from the Holy Spirit, asked Ananias why he had lied, not to men, but to God. On hearing this, Ananias immediately fell down dead. Three hours later, Sapphira also came, not knowing that her husband had died, and Peter asked her whether they had in fact sold the land at the price that her husband had said. Sapphira confirmed this. St. Peter then said to her: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out" (Acts 5:9). And at once she, too, fell down dead at Peter's feet.

Jannes and Jambres were among the first sorcerers of Egypt, who resisted Moses and Aaron when they asked Pharaoh to liberate the Hebrews. They were harshly punished by God for this impiety of theirs. We do not encounter these names in the Old Testament, though they are constantly mentioned in rabbinical books (see II St. Timothy 3:8 [a reference to Exodus 7:11—*Trans.*]).

**** Gehazi was a servant of the Prophet Elissaios, who fell into the following sin: Naiman, commander of the Syrian army [not the King of Syria, as the editor of the Greek text wrongly calls him—*Trans.*] had been struck by leprosy. A young maidservant from Judæa told Naiman's wife that the Prophet Elissaios could heal him. Naiman, therefore, went to Elissaios, who ordered him to go and wash himself in the Jordan seven times, in order to be healed, which he did. Naiman then wanted to remunerate Elissaios; however, he refused and accepted nothing. After Naiman had departed, Gehazi went to meet him in secret, without Elissaios' knowledge, and received from him two talents of silver and two new robes. Elissaios then cursed him and Naiman's leprosy fell on him (IV Kings 5).

Hypothesis VII

That he who shamelessly betrays or removes anything from among those things belonging to the monastery sins very greatly before God and will be punished more severely; for this reason we should care for these things as being dedicated to God and not despise the most insignificant things; and that negligence hurts everyone.

A. From the Life of St. Evthymios

1. In the Monastery of St. Evthymios there lived a monk from Galatia,* Theodotos, who was a member of the brotherhood. One time, the following happened to him, on account of the envy of the Evil One. Stephen, who was Abbot of the same monastery before Thomas, brought to the monastery six hundred gold coins, which came from the estate of his deceased brother.

Theodotos stole these six hundred gold coins, which had been placed in the *Diakonikon* [a chamber to one side of the Altar for the storage of liturgical items—*Trans.*] when Thomas of Apamea assumed the Abbotcy. On the following day, Theodotos woke up very early and pretended to be angry and very indignant, since he could find no quiet. Thus, on this pretext he left the monastery, supposedly because he could find no peace; but in reality, he did this to escape the attention of the monks and to make off with the money.

Indeed, then, he took the road leading to the Holy City, and began walking towards it. When he reached a place opposite the Monastery of Martyrios,** he sat in silence and, having taken out the gold coins, kept fifty of them and put the rest under a large rock. He placed markers in order to recognize the spot, and immediately set off for Jerusalem. After renting horses in Joppa and paying a deposit, he returned to the rock where he had hidden the gold coins. But when he came close to the place—oh, eyes of God that see everything! oh, most righteous judgments of God!—he saw that a monstrous serpent, fearful to behold, had dug a hole beneath the rock. This serpent looked as if it had been assigned to guard the gold coins and to prevent Theodotos from ap-

proaching what belonged to someone else.

Theodotos took fright and fled empty-handed. But he returned again, finding the fearful guardian of the gold coins, unsleeping, as though it were keeping vigil on top of the money, not allowing him to draw even remotely close to the rock. When he attempted to approach, he was chased away by the serpent with frenzy, and he trembled so much that he begged to be able to escape from there.

On the following day, he came again to the spot; then, suddenly, it was as if some aerial force had fallen upon Theodotos from above and, like a cudgel, struck his head so violently that it overturned him and threw him to the ground as one dead. Some nurses,*** when they came and found him in this miserable state, lifted him up into their arms and conveyed him to the hospital in the Holy City. After remaining there for some days under treatment, one evening, in a dream, he saw a certain Elder, who appeared very angry with him: "You will not be able to rise from this bed at all," he told him, "unless you first return to the monastery of St. Evthymios the money that you stole."

He then summoned a nearby innkeeper, to whom he revealed the theft in detail, as well as everything that had happened thereafter. He sent him to explain everything in detail to the monastery. As soon as they learned these things, the Elders who were close to the Abbot—Thomas and Leontios—went straight to the Holy City. After putting Theodotos on a stretcher, they took him, so that he could show them the place where he had hidden the gold coins. They indeed found the gold coins under the rock. That fearful guardian—oh, the wonder!—had departed, so as to yield the coins to the true owners of the treasure. They then immediately took the gold coins, and, when they saw that what Theodotos had spent was an insignificant sum, forgave him and returned. From that moment he was delivered from his evil and regained his health.

2. Another monk, named Paul, was from Cilicia.**** He had come from the Martyrios Monastery; having become demonized, he was taken by his associates to the tomb of St. Evthymios. They placed him beside the shrine of the Saint's Relics. At midnight, the Saint appeared and cast the demon out of the monk. The true proof of his cure was this: the same night, at the time when the nocturnal psalmody was being chanted, Paul left the place where they had put him, took part in the psalmody together with the Chanters, and, in front of all, recounted the cure which God had wrought for him. I know this from personal experience, because I, the author, had at that time been accepted into the

Monastery of St. Evthymios the Great.

Paul remained in the *cœnobion* for the rest of his life, preserving gratitude unextinguished in his heart. He participated with the other brothers in every task and service. Once, when we were gathering food in the desert (this food is what is commonly called "*manouthia*"), we asked Paul, who was gathering with us, what he had suffered and for what reason he had come to the *cœnobion*, and how he had been cured beside the shrine. He eagerly related everything to us in detail, since he had now gained confidence:

"I had been entrusted with a duty in the Martyrios Monastery," he told us, to begin. "I do not know how, but I was overcome by the love of avarice. Since I was poor and could not acquire a single *drachma* anywhere, the thought came to me to steal some of the holy vessels and, in this way, to have something of my own. After I was conquered by this evil thought and had banished the fear of God from my heart, I stole the keys from the holy Sanctuary and, having opened the *Skevophylakion* [the place where sacred liturgical vessels are kept—*Trans.*], I kept some of the holy vessels, like an evildoer, for myself; but other vessels I heedlessly gave away to others.

"After completing my duties, I put the keys back in the Altar. I then sat with some of the brothers at dinner, where I drank wine to satiety, falling asleep on my bed in a miserable state. Immediately, my heart was inundated with thoughts of wantonness of every kind, as if all of these circumstances had contributed to such. I, who was now dizzy from drink, gladly let my mind be taken captive by these thoughts. These shameful thoughts so dominated me, that I had the impression that there was a woman beside me, and I thought I was sleeping with her.

"Immediately, something like a dark, black cloud fell on me. And assuredly, this dark cloud which fell on me was the foul demon who, after binding my hands, kept me captive for quite some time. I was now being punished by him. What fearful torment did I not suffer at his hands? For how is it possible for such an enemy to be satisfied with the injury he does to a man, once he has received the power to maltreat him? I suffered Hell on earth, until the brothers, out of pity, took me up and placed me beside the reliquary of the Saint. As soon as they had placed me next to the shrine, as if I had been relieved of a great weight, I came to; and I called upon the Saint with fervent tears to deliver me from the influence of the evil demon. I began this entreaty in the evening, and did not stop invoking him for a moment.

"Around midnight, I sensed that I was in some Divine and won-

drous place, the setting, beauty, and charm of which anyone would have desired to behold, but which it is impossible for me to describe in words. Then, it seemed to me that a black monastic hat, lined with fur, had been placed on my head. But may that fur—O Evthymios, Servant of God, who chases away evils—never be placed on anyone else. For on the surface it had, instead of hairs, thorns. And these thorns were neither small nor malleable; rather, in size and length, they resembled sharp points, like those used for writing. They pricked my head so hard that I could hardly even breathe.

"Oppressed, then, by such an evil, I seemed to have the name of Evthymios constantly on my tongue, and to be calling upon him; and thereupon, he appeared to me, surrounded by much light, with white hair, round-faced, with lively eyes, short of stature, with a long beard, and clothed in a black *rason* [Gr. for "cassock," a long, loose-fitting robe that reaches down to the ankles and forms the basic element of the monastic habit—*Trans.*]. Holding a staff in his hand, he approached me and said to me: 'What do you want me to do for you?' With fear and trembling, I answered: 'That you take pity on me for this calamity of mine and that you deliver me from this fearful demon.'

"Again he questioned me, rather more severely: 'Are you convinced by what has happened that nothing can escape the eye of God? Have you learned from all your sufferings what a great evil it is for anyone to despise God, especially when he has dedicated himself to Him? For just as the pleasing offering of those things dedicated to the Church goes straight to God, and He for His part knows how to bestow His bounties from on high, so also those who misuse these gifts do not sin against anyone other than God Himself, from Whom they will receive the punishment they deserve.'

"'For if Ananias of old, together with his wife, was punished so harshly for taking from that which they had themselves offered, such that they died the moment they committed this theft, how can he be forgiven who does not respect someone else's gifts (Acts 5:1-11)? However, if you promise now that you will never stretch your hand out to take sacred things again, nor experience pleasure from the acceptance of base thoughts, God will certainly have compassion on you and will heal you at once. For He loves mankind and takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," as the Divine Scriptures teach, "but desires that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Everything which you suffered happened to you because you decided to touch sacred objects; and not only did you thus prove untrustworthy before God, but you there-

upon turned your attention to deception and theft, "reaping," indeed, "where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed" (St. Matthew 25:24).

"'From this sin came your carnal warfare and wantonness, and this fearful tempest from the demons started from that.'

"As soon as I heard these words from St. Evthymios, I promised him that in the future I would be very attentive. Then the Saint reproved the loathsome demon and taking the monastic hat with his hand, he forcibly removed it from my head. This hat immediately changed shape and, in the hands of the Saint, looked to me like a short Ethiopian with eyes like flames. I perceived that in front of the Saint's feet a very deep pit had opened up, into which he cast the demon. After turning again towards me, he said to me what Christ said to the paralytic: 'Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee' (St. John 5:14).

"After being relieved of this suffering and fervently giving thanks to God, I was completely healed of that evil, and am still healthy."

What Paul recounted—adds the author (Cyril)—I also wrote down, that the whole world might come to know of it.

B. From Abba Cassian

In the monasteries of the East, the brothers serve in turn almost every week in the kitchens and in other duties —not only to give one another rest, but also, by serving one another in turn, to put their love into practice. When the week is over, on Sunday, after Matins they hand over the necessary equipment, which has all been inventoried, to others, whose turn it is to serve. When the latter receive them, they take care of them and pay very close attention to them, lest any of them should be lost or broken, as if they were sacred vessels consecrated to God. They are ready, that is, to give account not only to the Steward, whom they have before them, but also to God Himself, should any of these items happen to be broken or damaged from carelessness or laziness. In verification of what I have said, I shall recount the following incident, which I saw with my own eyes.

During the week, while one brother was serving, the Steward passed by the kitchen. He happened to see a few lentils that had fallen on the ground. He did not overlook it, as if it were an insignificant matter. At once, he severely reprimanded the brother who was serving that week and imposed a punishment on him for being negligent about

things dedicated to God and for violating his conscience. With such faith and dedication do the monks care for everything and administer all things, that they heed things which seem small and negligible to us, such as moving a vessel that has been awkwardly placed or picking up a utensil that has been left unattended, believing that even for these small acts of service they will receive a reward from God the Master.

In all of the East, as I said, they uphold the rule that the monks serve in a certain task for a week. But in Egypt, the servers do not alternate, but each one is employed in that task in which he is experienced and judged capable; and he remains in this throughout his life, without a substitute, as long as he is able to perform it and is not impeded by old age or illness. Care for the kitchen is entrusted to the most capable brother, as long as his virtue increases and his bodily powers serve him.

C. From St. Ephraim

1. Negligence is the betrayer of all good things; it is succeeded by fearful captivity, which has as its consequence the inactivity of the hands and carelessness as regards personal orderliness; but when he so decides, he who abides in this state can flee from it.

2. A lazy monk will not even close the window of his cell, until it is shattered by the blowing wind, while the attentive monk will be beyond reproach.

* That is to say, he came from Galatia in Asia Minor, the inhabitants of which were called Galatians.

** The Martyrios Monastery was located in Palestine, to the west of the Lavra of St. Evthymios, from which it was about fifteen *stadia* in distance (i.e., about 2,700 meters, when we consider that a *stadion* was equivalent to one hundred eighty-one meters). Patriarch Porphyrios of Jerusalem built this monastery around 471 A.D. [The Greek text is apparently corrupted, here. The monastery was established by Patriarch Martyrios of Jerusalem, who reigned from 478-486 A.D. There is no Porphyrios listed among the Patriarchs of Jerusalem—*Trans.*] In all probability, the monastery stood on the site of the present-day village of el-Mourasas, five kilometers to the south of Bethany.

*** Nurses in quarantine centers were called "*Lazariotes*," from the Italian word *lazaretto*, which means "hospital."

**** Cilicia, from which he hailed, is a region of southeastern Asia Minor, bounded on the east by Mt. Amanon, on the north and on the west by the Taurus mountain range, and on the south by the Sea of Cilicia. In antiquity, the capital of Cilicia was Tarsus, the homeland of the Apostle Paul. Other cities in the region are Mopsuestia, Mopsucrene, and Issus, which is familiar from the victory there of Alexander the Great.

Hypothesis VIII

With what disposition we should serve or be served and what is the profit resulting from service.

A. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

The *Diakonetes** must perform his duty with diligence and with all of his strength. He should take into consideration the fact that he is doing the work of God, and he should not display negligence in anything or omit or neglect his duty out of laziness, grief, exasperation, or because he is bickering with his brothers. For everything in the monastery is dedicated to God, and he who serves negligently faces great and very severe punishment for insulting God. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (St. Matthew 25:40), says the Lord; and again: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me" (St. Matthew 25:45). Whether, then, one serves with diligence or with negligence, his service is directed to God.

Hear, then, what the Prophet Jeremiah says about those who are negligent in their service: "Cursed be the man who doeth the work of the Lord carelessly" (Jeremiah 31:10). Let us make sure, brethren, that we remain far from this terrible curse and that we perform our duty with every diligence and care, as servants of Christ, that we may gain a blessing as disciples of the Blessed One, Who said: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor" (St. John 12:26); and again: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (St. Matthew 20:28). He exhorts His disciples in the same way: "If any man desire to be first among you, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (St. Mark 9:35).

Let us hear what the Apostle says: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation; giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in

watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth" (II Corinthians 6:2-7). "But as the servants of Christ, doing the Will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:6-7).

Yet elsewhere the Apostle advises: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shown toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10). He says also about this: "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints" (Romans 15:25). "Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints" (Romans 15:30-31).

Let us understand, then, my brethren, that if these Beacons of the inhabited earth and Pillars of the Church served the poor in Jerusalem with such struggle and love, how much more are we obliged to serve our brothers in the Lord with eagerness and concern and to strive in every way to lighten their load, as though we were serving God through them.

B. From St. Barsanouphios

1. A brother consulted an Elder: "O compassionate Father," he said to him, "I fall at your knees, that I may be strengthened through your prayers; for I find myself distracted the whole day long, and I almost never have occasion to bring to mind the name of God. If God ever grants me, by your prayers, a little distress for my errors, I gradually lose this, on account of the different thoughts that invade my soul from without. I am afraid of managing the infirmary, for, since this is a position of authority, it may perhaps lure me into pride and outspokenness. Likewise, I am afraid that the constant handling of the ingredients for various foods might entice me into gluttony. You understand, Father, that I am not saying these things to you because I am tired of serving; but what am I, the wretched one, to do? I fear lest, by remaining here, I might stimulate my passions, whether by some fault of my own or, as may be the case, through demonic effect. Reveal to me, therefore, Father, the Will of God and strengthen me by your prayers, so that I may

fulfill what you tell me. And forgive me."

To this the Elder replied: "Listen, brother, and may the Lord make it known to you, that from the time we entrusted you with this service, our hands and heart were with you; or rather, with you was the hand of God, Whom we invoked in prayer for the salvation of your soul, for strength in your service, for your progress, and for your protection by Him. You cannot be saved in any other way than this. From now on, do not be burdened; as often as you fall, get up again. And as often as you make mistakes, reproach yourself, until the Lord takes pity on you, as you desire.

"Make sure, then, not to neglect your work. Regarding distractions, brother, I have the following to say to you: People endlessly hear about a certain city; but on happening to enter it, they do not know that it is the one they have heard about. You, now, are in the remembrance of God the whole day long; but are you aware of it? If you have been given an obedience and have taken care to observe it, this is submission to, and the remembrance of, God. Brother John was right when he said to you: 'First pull off the leaves, and with the help of God you will pull off the fruit as well.' Since you do not know what is spiritually profitable for you, follow those who do know. This is humility, and therein will you find the Grace of God.

"Know that salvation comes to you from this. For your coming here was not possible without the Will of God; it was God Who guided you. Be strengthened in the Lord. The gain that you reap from the distraction that you speak about is not small. Moreover, since we have still not attained to perfection, so as to be completely freed from the captivity of the passions, it is more profitable for us to babble in the distraction of our obediences than in the passions. Take courage, then, for the Lord Who placed you in this work will guide you Himself and we will bear your burden with you.

"Let the Devil not deceive you through your desires; for Scripture says: 'They deceive the hearts of the guileless with fair words' (Proverbs 14:15). He Who placed you in this work is All Things; it is He Who said to His Disciples: 'Behold, I send you forth' (St. Matthew 10:16); and: 'Lo, I am with you' (St. Matthew 28:20). Do not be afraid, and do not neglect anything under your direction in the infirmary on account of fatigue resulting from your anxiety about being in authority. If you keep in mind what I have told you, you will not have to answer for anything. Just be attentive to yourself as much as you can, and God will help you. And with His Grace you will be strengthened."

2. Another brother was entrusted with the duty of doorkeeper of the *cœnobion*. Since he grew weary when he was alone, he asked the same great Elder whether or not he would be allowed to have another brother with him. The Elder replied to him:

"Brother, if anyone desires to come to the Lord and walk the way of salvation, he must expect temptations, afflictions, and sorrows every hour. For Holy Scripture says: 'My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptations' (Ecclesiasticus 2:1). The Lord said: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me' (St. Luke 9:23). He who wishes to become His disciple is obligated to do obedience unto death.

"That you are alone and grow a little weary does you more good than having someone else with you. When it is needed, another will always help you; for in this way, when another helps you now and then, idle talk does not develop as much as when you are always together.

"If you grow tired from toil, you find humility; and if you find humility, you receive forgiveness for your sins. For Holy Scripture says: 'Look upon my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins' (Psalm 24:18). Insofar as you are humbled, you receive Grace; if you receive Grace, Grace helps you. Only after he had labored more than all the Apostles did St. Paul say: 'Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me' (I Corinthians 15:10). If you believe unhesitatingly, you will be able to find strength and to carry out, not only the duty of doorkeeper, but other duties as well. Take care in the work of God, taking your strength from hope in Him, since you do not know how God has ordained that things shall be."

The brother said, again: "Pray, Father, that God will grant me understanding and strength, for I am ignorant and weak."

The Elder replied: "If you believe, brother, that God was able to give Abraham children from barren stones (St. Matthew 3:9) and that He Who gave human speech to the mouth of an ass** can also enrich your own mouth with speech and give you strength and understanding, making you wise, then you can be certain that God will bestow all of these things on you. Brother, do you not grasp how things stand? The front door of the *cœnobion* belongs to God; and God knows that His servant, the doorkeeper, has need of wisdom and understanding, of knowledge and strength, of help and discernment. 'For your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him' (St. Matthew 6:8). If you show perseverance and patience, your soul will be blessed."

As I understand it, the brother was very weak in body, and for this

reason, although it is not very onerous, he grew tired when serving alone as doorkeeper. Yet, note how many good things this God-bearing Father promised that this service would bring to him.

C. From St. Ephraim

1. O monk, have you left your cell to fulfill your obedience? Guard your senses vigilantly, lest thereby you introduce warfare into your soul and disturbance into your thoughts. The wise monk, when he is sent to perform a service, will dispose his soul towards preserving tranquility; that is, when he returns, he will not carry with him words that occasion disturbance; whereas the monk who is incautious and untaught makes ready temptations for himself.

2. The wise doorkeeper knows to respond with kindness to the poor man and the man who is faint-hearted, while the imprudent one will always be unwise and arrogant. Yes, brother, perhaps we do not have anything to give; but let us offer a kind word, considering that we ourselves may fall into the same state; "Whatever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss" (Ecclesiasticus 7:36).

3. The lazy doorkeeper will be punished very severely, whereas the energetic and industrious one prepares a crown for himself. The faithful doorkeeper is, after God, the guardian of souls; whereas one who is unfaithful will lose his soul. For he who secretly opens the door to the impassioned is unfaithful, and for this reason will lose his soul with them. To the monk who does not walk the right path, the faithful doorkeeper will not be pleasing. He who pursues righteousness will not scandalize his neighbor.

Brother, if you are assigned to a common task with another, do not be negligent about your salvation, making excuses with pretexts for sins (Psalm 140:4) to justify yourself. For Joseph served in Egypt, assuming not only care for one household, but for the whole of Egypt; and yet, he did not flee from the true path, and the Lord glorified him.***

D. From St. Isaac

When a bird flies from its nest because it needs food, it always returns to it again, in order to give birth to its young. So it is with the monk: even if he sometimes needs to leave his cell for some indispen-

sable necessity, he ought always to think about his return, being as quick as possible in returning to his cell, in which, through his effort and by the Grace of God, the fruit of eternal life is produced.

* A *Diakonetes* in a monastery is the name given to any monk who has been given the duty of performing a specific task. Every task in a monastery is called a "service" (*"diakonia"*) [or obedience—*Trans.*]: service in the kitchen, in the refectory, in the infirmary, etc.

** The ass whose mouth God opened was the ass of Balaam; the latter was a *mantis* (prophet), the son of Beor, from the city of Phathura in Mesopotamia. King Balak of the Moabites sent Balaam to curse the Hebrews, when he saw how many they were and was afraid that they might conquer him. Although he was grasping and avaricious, Balaam at first refused, fearing the commandment of God, Who forbade him to carry out Balak's order. Finally, after receiving a large sum of money, Balaam backed down, mounted an ass, and went to curse the Hebrews. But God dispatched an Angel, who prevented the ass from going any farther. Balaam repeatedly smote his donkey with his staff, but to no avail. The ass then opened its mouth and asked Balaam: "What have I done to thee, that thou hast now smitten me thrice?" God then opened the eyes of Balaam, who saw an Angel with a sword in his hand, preventing the ass from moving forward; and, recognizing his sin, he asked God to forgive him. Instead of bringing a curse on Israel, he blessed it three times (Numbers 22).

*** This is a reference to Joseph, the son of Jacob by Rachel, whom his brothers sold, out of envy, to Ishmaelite merchants. He was taken by them to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, who, when he saw that the Lord was with Joseph and that whatever the youth did turned out well with God's blessing, appointed him administrator of his household and his property. And Potiphar, as Scripture says, knew nothing except the bread which he ate. In this way, Joseph received the responsibility of looking after a household (that of Potiphar), without his impeding the observance of God's Law (Genesis 39:1-6). For this reason, when he was subsequently slandered by Potiphar's wife [because as a devout Hebrew, he refused to sin with her], he was thrown into prison, where he remained for two years. Summoned by Divine Providence, he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams. In order to show his gratitude, Pharaoh made Joseph "ruler of the whole land of Egypt" (Genesis 41).

Hypothesis IX

When and by whom service is to be preferred to prayer.

A. From Abba Mark

Our Lord, knowing that everything rests on prayer, says: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Matthew 6:31-33). Assuredly, with these words our Lord calls us to greater faith. For who, after he has succeeded in casting off anxious care for temporal things and, in freeing himself from every necessity, will not also put all of his faith in the Lord regarding eternal good things? Explaining this truth, He said: "He who is faithful in small things is faithful also in great" [*cf.* St. Luke 16:10]. But in this, too, the Lord showed His love for mankind. Since He knows that daily concern for the flesh is indispensable, He did not forbid it, but advised us to occupy ourselves only with today, while urging us not to think about the next day, as befits a God-loving soul. For insofar as we are men and wear flesh, it is not possible for us completely to overlook our bodily needs.

It *is* possible to restrict many things to what is absolutely necessary through prayer and abstinence; but it is impossible to overlook them entirely. This is precisely why he who desires to attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ and to become a perfect man (Ephesians 4:13), in accordance with Holy Scripture, should not prefer various duties to prayer; nor should he undertake these, unless it is necessary to do so. But when, out of necessity and by the Providence of God, these duties present themselves to us, we should not dismiss them and cast them aside, on the pretext, perhaps, of prayer; but we should discern the difference between prayer and service that presents itself at a given moment and serve the Providence of God without excuses. For he who does not acknowledge this is not in accord with the nature of Holy Scripture, wherein, while one commandment is different from another, all embrace each other; nor does he desire, as the Prophet commands, to direct himself to the whole of the commandments, when by the Providence of God he encounters them (Psalm 118:128).

We should without fail accept the necessary duties that are imposed on us by the Providence of God; but we should lay aside *needless tasks*, preferring prayer, and especially when these tasks entice us into extravagance and lust for money. For the more one can, by the strength of the Lord, restrict these preoccupations and cut off the fuel which feeds them, the more he collects his mind from anxious wanderings. The more he collects his mind, the more he allows room for pure prayer and manifests his faith in Christ. If one cannot do this, because of a lack of faith or some weakness, at least let him be well aware of the truth, and let him try as hard as he can, reproaching himself for his inability and for the infantile condition in which he still finds himself. For it is greatly preferable that we give account to God for our deficiencies than for error and arrogance.

Beyond what we have said, we need much discernment from God, so that we may know when and what kind of service we should prefer to prayer. This is because every one of us, occupied as he is with what pleases him, thinks that he is carrying out a necessary service, without realizing that if one is to please God, he must judge whether things are pleasing to God and not to himself. But what is much more difficult for us to discern is the following: that even those demands which are obligatory are not always put forth equally; rather, according to circumstance, it behooves us to give preference, sometimes, to one thing and, sometimes, yet to another, since different services are not carried out continuously, but at a fixed time. Whereas, by contrast, prayer has been laid down as a spiritual service without interruption (I Thessalonians 5:17). For precisely this reason, we should prefer prayer to occupations that are not necessary.

The Apostles taught precisely this difference between the absolutely obligatory service of prayer and the various other occupations. When the multitude of Christians in Jerusalem wanted to engage them in serving the common table, the Apostles said: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word; and the saying pleased the whole multitude" (Acts 6:2-5). What are we taught by this? That for those who cannot dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to prayer, it is good for them to perform with diligence the service assigned to them, that they should not fall away from both. But for those who can, it is preferable that they not neglect what is better.

Hypothesis X

One must eagerly rise up in the night in prayer and attend thereto. From where and for what reason prayer was appointed, from the beginning, at certain hours, and why we must not be remiss therein.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

At one of the monasteries established by the servant of God Benedict, there was an indolent monk. He did not have the patience to be with the brothers at the time of prayer; rather, when all of the brothers would kneel before God, he would leave the Church and give himself over to babbling and wasting his time.

So, the Elder, having counselled him repeatedly without success, took him to the servant of God Benedict and revealed to him the brother's sickness. And the holy Father, having in a good manner and properly spoken with him about his laziness, and having encouraged him, sent him back to his monastery. When the monk returned to the monastery, he followed the counsels of the Saint for two days; on the third day, however, he returned to his diabolical habits and began, at prayer time, to wander aimlessly. The Elder, on seeing that the brother had been conquered anew by the demon of indolence, once more paid a visit to the Saint and related to him the monk's condition.

"I will go myself," the man of God replied, "and correct him."

So, he went to the monastery. And standing among the brothers in the Church, as soon as the psalmody ended and the brothers, kneeling, devoted themselves to prayer, the Saint saw a young man, dark in appearance, grab the bottom of the cassock of the monk in question—who could not attend to his prayer—and drag him out of the Church. Now, when the prayers had come to an end, the man of God went out of the Church and found the brother standing outside; then, he struck him with his staff for his spiritual blindness. And from that very moment precisely, the brother was freed of the impatience which had governed him, and thereafter he eagerly stayed with the brothers in prayer, until it was finished. Nor did the demon dare any longer to approach, having finally fled from him.

B. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

The Blessed John, wishing to correct the impatience of those who did not have the endurance to remain in the Divine services, did the following: Seeing that many of the lazier brothers were leaving the Church after the reading of the Holy Gospel and gossiping among themselves, he, on an important Feast Day, left the Divine Liturgy, went out of the Church, and sat among the crowd.

Since they were all astonished, he said to them: "You should not be surprised; for, where the sheep are, of course, there the sheepherder will be, since it is for your benefit that we regularly hold liturgical services. So, when you are waiting outside, our efforts are of no benefit at all. I forced myself, therefore, to come out with you, too, when you left the Church; and when you go back in, I will also reenter."

This brought many to correction and freed them from their bad habit.

C. From the Life of St. Pachomios

St. Pachomios the Great was once teaching his monks and showing them the great benefit that comes from instruction. At that moment, he seemed to fall into spiritual ecstasy, and for some time he did not speak. Immediately afterwards, he said peacefully to the monastery Steward:

"Go to such and such a cell and see who is there; he is showing scorn for the salvation of his soul. Look in on him and bear witness to the damage which he is doing to his soul. For he did not even come here, in order to hear the word of God and in order to take strength against him who is causing him grief in the world. Why, then, is he not praying in his cell, rather than sleeping? I do not think that he will become a good monk."

In fact, after a short time, this monk left the brotherhood and returned to the world, since he could not bear the light yoke of the Lord.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "If you are working in your cell and the time for prayer approaches, do not say, 'Let me finish with my few palm branches or a small basket, and afterwards I will be on my way.' Rather, rise at every appointed hour, in order to discharge your debt to God, since otherwise you will bit by bit become lazy in your prayer and your

work and you will isolate your soul from every labor, both bodily and spiritual. For your eagerness will be manifest in the timeliness of your prayer."

2. The following incident is told about Abba Makarios: Once, as he was going to the Church for the services, outside of the cell of one of the brothers he saw a host of demons. Among them, some had the form of women, who were saying unseemly things, others that of young men, who were also saying vile things, while others were dancing and had taken on various other forms. The Elder, since he was clairvoyant, perceived the reason for this demonic phenomenon. Sighing, he said to himself, "This brother is undoubtedly wasting his life in laziness, and for this reason the evil spirits have surrounded his cell."

As soon as the service was over, he returned to this brother's cell and said to him: "Grievous things weigh heavily upon me. However, I believe that if you pray for me, God will surely lighten my grief."

The brother, doing a prostration to the Elder, replied:

"Father, I am not worthy to pray for you."

The Elder, however, insisted, and entreated the brother.

"I am not leaving," he told him, "unless you give me your word that every night you will repeatedly say a prayer for me."

Thereupon, the brother obeyed the Elder's command. Elder Makarios did this, since he wanted to give him a reason for praying at night.

So, having awakened the next night, the brother prayed for the Elder. In the course thereof, he experienced inner contrition and said to himself: "Wretched soul of mine, how have you prayed for this Elder, yet you have not prayed for yourself?" Thus, he prayed for himself, too, which took some time. After that, the monk prayed twice every night.

The next Sunday, as the Elder was once more going to Church, he saw the demons standing outside the brother's cell, as before. This time, however, they seemed to be very sad and sullen, since the brother was praying. Filled therefore with joy, the Elder went into the brother's cell and said:

"Brother, do me a favor and pray twice for me during the night."

The brother obeyed. And after praying twice for the Elder, he once more felt inner contrition and said to himself: "O, my suffering soul, offer up yet another prayer for yourself."

And so that week passed, the brother praying four times a night. On Sunday, as the Elder passed by on his way to services again, he saw the demons even more upset and completely silent. Thanking God, on

his return, he once more went into the brother's cell and asked him to offer up yet another prayer on his behalf. The brother agreed, and added yet another prayer for himself. So it is that he prayed six times a night. And when the Elder passed by the following Sunday on the way to services, he saw the demons standing far away from the brother's cell. As soon as they saw him enter the brother's cell, they began to insult him, filled with wrath because of the salvation of the brother.

The Elder glorified God in the brother's cell and counselled him not to be lazy, but to pray unceasingly. And since, thereafter, the brother showed zeal and interest in his prayers, the demons finally went away from him.

E. From St. Ephraim

Brother, when one of the brothers knocks at your cell door during the night to ask for assistance in the services of worship to God, rise up quickly, in order to show your eagerness to the more indolent monks, that they might be induced to vigilance, in keeping with the Divine words: "Mine eyes awoke before the morning, that I might meditate in Thy words" (Psalm 118:148) and, "At midnight I arose to give thanks unto Thee, because of the judgments of Thy righteousness" (Psalm 118:62). Have you not learned that the Prophet Samuel,* though he was repeatedly beckoned by a mysterious voice, nonetheless was not even once remiss in rising up, despite the fact that he was still a young child? If something happens and you fall into a deep sleep—perhaps by some diabolical energy—and are late in attending the services, when you wake up, do not say it is too late to go, using the excuse that the end of the service is supposedly approaching, saying, "Why should I go now?"

Do not utter such words, for these are the words of sluggards and the lazy; instead, force yourself to get up and run to the services, as though you were being chased, in the way that a deer flees from the nets of the hunter. For you should know that just as those who enter into evil places shall give an accounting for their every word on the Day of Judgment, so every person who works good will receive a reward for even a single step towards the good, or for any good word. If, then, you arrive even at the time of the very last blessing, go in and do not be embarrassed; for you can, after confessing what happened to you to the Superior, go to your cell after the end of the service and say those Psalms which the fantasy of the demons caused you to miss—if, of course, the Superior allows you to do so. Thus, the next day you will find yourself

better prepared for the work of the Lord. If, however, you abandon your work because of sloth, without having to and without being ill, you will be greatly injured.

Know also this, my beloved, that the more one attends without reason to the flesh, so much more abundantly are the passions with him. And when the body is oppressed by the evil habits of the flesh, it becomes barren. It is for this reason that the Savior says: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life" (St. Luke 21:34). By reason thereof, the Apostle also says: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27). If, however, one forces his body in the work of the Lord, then it becomes more robust and the soul shines forth. Because just as an athlete uses bodily exercises to adapt the body to the demands of a sport, so the struggler for piety is benefited when he is trained in any good work whatever.

I wish now to say something to you about drowsiness. I believe that there are three reasons for which it arises. That is, when a brother begins to chant or to pray, the Devil immediately makes him drowsy, so that he will abandon his prayer and retire. But if the brother nonetheless resists and is not negligent, the Devil can do nothing to him. He will be more greatly bothered by drowsiness if his stomach is loaded with food or drink. Later, in the midst of services, weariness comes to the brother by virtue of his laziness and, not taking care to fortify his powers and stay until the Canon (the Church service) is completed, but becoming sleepy, he sees no harm in leaving during the psalmody to go to his bed or to sit outside the Church and sleep. Now, the Canon of daily services having ended, a brother may become weary; but this can be physiological, and especially when the brother is ill, and is something which we should forgive, since it is not, in all probability, unusual for those who are ill.

Whatever the case, brother, do not neglect to watch in all things (II St. Timothy 4:5); and when you are standing in the services, whether among the brothers or alone, in order to glorify our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and weariness first begins to bother you, the moment that you feel it, resist it with firmness. And if in the beginning this weariness should still overcome you one or more times, do not move away from where you are; you will thus gain great benefit. For the passion of excessive sleep is like that of gluttony. If one is accustomed to eating a lot of food, then his body will require a great deal of food. But if one

gets used to exercising self-control in eating, neither will his body require much food. The same thing applies to sleep. How can one dare to leave the services and go outside before the dismissal is said and without a serious reason? If, by way of example, you are invited to dinner by a wealthy person, would you dare to get up in the midst of the guests and go home? Would you not wait until everyone else got up to leave?

Let us fear, then, my beloved, the Master of Heaven and earth; let us take heed to thank Him, as it is written: "Cursed is the man that doeth the work of the Lord carelessly" (Jeremiah 31:10). Think of the fishermen, who work every night without sleep and are persistent in their work. If one of them should get drowsy and neglect his work, being overcome by tiredness, and fall asleep, upon awakening and seeing that he has caught nothing, while those who stayed awake were successful, he will begin to show regret within himself and to say: "Woe is me, a lazy man and a sluggard, for I fell asleep and will now return with empty hands." "They have slept their sleep, and...have found nothing in their hands" (Psalm 75:6).

Bring to mind, as well, those who work with pottery or iron; you will discover, therein, excessive toil and intensive nights without sleep. Now, they endure, for the sake of their work in the present life, such toil and hardship, while we, enduring nothing tiring or loathsome, stand in a clean and blessed place before our Lord and God, with great sobriety, peace and spiritual joy, and good hope. Why, my beloved, are we negligent and lazy, not giving ourselves over with full strength to the sweetest worship of our Lord and Savior? For David also says: "How sweet are Thy words unto my throat! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psalm 118:103); elsewhere, again, he says: "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee, and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed" (Psalm 70:23).

Is the time that we live on the earth so great, such that we should neglect our salvation? Behold, the same Prophet declares: "Man is like unto vanity: his days as a shadow pass away" (Psalm 143:4). Beloved Servant of Christ, do not wrangle with me, the lazy and impatient one, but know well that he who is vigilant will gain, while the negligent and lazy individual destroys himself. For each person will give an accounting for himself alone. And neither should you think of sleep and bodily rest as something beneficial; rather, think of them as a great waste. For, in truth, it is the Kingdom of God which is of profit.

Let us, therefore, compel ourselves, beloved, to attain to the Kingdom of Heaven and its blessedness. As it is written: "Blessed are those servants, whom their lord when he cometh shall find watching" (St.

Luke 12:37). Let us exhort and admonish not only ourselves, but also each other—in love—to have fear of the Lord; and let us arouse each other with eagerness to give glory to our God and Savior Jesus Christ, in order that, not only for our own sake, but also for the benefit of our neighbor, we might receive great rewards from Him Who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (St. Matthew 25:40).

F. From St. Isaiah

If you rise during the night in your cell to do your prayers, take care that you do not happen to show disdain for this sacred moment by your laziness and, instead of honoring God, induce His wrath. Stand in fear of God. Do not lean against the wall or rest your feet, standing first on one and then on the other, as the thoughtless do. Force your heart not to be occupied with your own desires, so that God might receive your sacrifice.

G. From the *Constitutions of Sts. Peter and Paul*

Pray in the morning, at the third hour,** at the sixth hour, at the ninth hour, in the evening, and in the middle of the night, when the cock crows. In the morning, because the Lord gave us light, driving away the night and bringing the day; at the third hour, because it was then that Christ received from Pilate the sentence of Crucifixion; at the sixth hour, because it was then that Christ was Crucified; and at the ninth hour, because the whole earth was shaken by terror, on account of the Crucifixion of Christ through the impudence of the impious Jews and because it could not endure the insult against the Lord.

In the evening, pray because the coming night is given to us as rest from our daily labors. Finally, in the middle of the night—when the cock crows—because at that hour the coming of the day is announced, that we might undertake the labor of light. [The *Constitutions of Sts. Peter and Paul* are found in Book VIII, Section 4, of the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Patrologia Graeca,* Vol. I, col. 1136BC—*Trans.*]

* Samuel, the son of Helkana and Hannah the Prophetess, was a Hebrew Prophet and the last of the Judges. From his earliest years, Samuel was dedicated to God by his parents and entrusted to the high priest, Eli, to be brought up by him. One day, when Eli was apparently overcome by sleep, Samuel remained in the Temple, and the Lord called him. The child arose at once, ran to Eli, and said: "Here I am; thou didst call me

and I came." Eli answered: "Go to thy place; I did not call thee." But the Lord called Samuel again, and the boy again went to Eli, who ordered him to return to his place. This occurred three times, and then Eli realized that the call was from God, and he instructed Samuel, if he should be called again, to say: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth Thee." This, indeed, is what happened, and God revealed to Samuel that he would become a Judge of Israel after Eli and would anoint Saul King of Israel (I Kings 3).

** Religious writers of the Roman era typically divide the twenty-four-hour period into night and day, each of these being subdivided throughout all periods of the year into twelve hours. In that era, the modern system of measuring time had not yet come into effect, with regard to the subdivision of the twenty-four-hour period into either twenty-four hours, each of fixed duration, or into one twenty-fourth of the temporal interval required for the completion of the twenty-four-hour cycle. At that time, the duration of the hours of the day was not the same as the duration of the hours of the night, since, as we have said, both the day and the night were each subdivided separately into twelve hours and, as a result, each hour constituted one-twelfth of the temporal interval required for the day from the rising of the sun until its setting, and for the night from the setting of the sun until its rising. Consequently, only at the equinox, when the duration of both the day and the night is the same, was the length of the hours of each of them the same. This also happens in the region of the equator. But for the regions on either side of the equator, the length of the day and the night varies according to the angle of the sun at different periods of the year.

The reckoning of the hours of the day began from the rising of the sun and ended at its setting, which was always called the twelfth hour of the day, while the reckoning of the hours of the night began from the setting of the sun and ended at its rising, when the twelve hours of the night were completed. According to this system, in the summer, when the days were long, the hours of summer days were of greater duration, while those of the night were of shorter duration, since the night was also shorter. By contrast, in the winter, when the days were short and the hours were of shorter duration, at nighttime the hours were longer in proportion to the duration of the night. When, therefore, we hear in Holy Scripture about the twelfth hour of the day, we are always to understand by this the hour of sunset; the sixth hour of the day is midday, while the sixth hour of the night is the middle of the night.

Apart from the subdivision of the day into twelve hours and of the night into another twelve, at the time that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, these periods were yet further subdivided into four quarters. The first quarter of the day was called the "third hour" or morning, and corresponds roughly to today's nine o'clock a.m.; the second quarter was called the "sixth hour" or "midday" (or "the hour of searing heat" [*kauma—Trans.*] in hot regions), and corresponds roughly to today's twelve o'clock noon; the third quarter was called the "ninth hour" or "afternoon," and corresponds roughly to today's three o'clock p.m.; and the fourth quarter was the twelfth hour and was called "dusk." The first quarter of the night was called the "first watch" or "evening"; the second was called the "second watch" or "midnight"; the third quarter was called the "third watch" or "cockcrow"; and the fourth was called the "fourth watch," or "morning," and was the interval of time before sunrise, the dawn—"*ta charamata*," as we say today. In this *Constitution* of theirs, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul decree that we should perform our prayers at these hours.

Hypothesis XI

Regarding psalmody and prayers and the orderliness that one should maintain in them.

A. From Palladios

Abba Pambo sent his disciple to sell his handiwork. As he told us, he was gone for ten days. At night, he slept in the narthex of the Church of the Holy Apostle Mark.* Upon seeing how the services were conducted in the city Churches, and having learned various *Troparia* [hymns], as well, he returned to his Elder.

"My child," the Elder told him, "you seem upset. Did you perhaps suffer some temptation in the city?"

"Indeed, Father," the brother replied. "We are wasting our days here in this desert, where we sing neither Canons nor *Troparia*. Now that I have been to Alexandria and have seen how the Chanters sing in the Church, I have become very saddened, since we do not sing Canons and *Troparia*." [The chanting of prayers and Psalms by the desert Fathers was very simple and monotonic, as their own descriptions of monastic worship in the isolated monasteries and sketes of Egypt aver. They were opposed to melodic singing, to anything theatrical, and to any sense of public "performance" in their private *and* common worship. In parish communities and larger city Churches, a more ornate form of worship and chanting prevailed. This offended the austere piety of many of the desert dwellers—*Trans.*]

The Elder answered him:

"Alas, my child. The days are coming upon us when monks will abandon the strong food given to them by the Holy Spirit and chase after songs and melodies. For what contrition, what tears, are born of standing in Church, or in one's cell, and bellowing with one's voice like an ox? For as long as we are standing before God, we must do so with compunction, our minds not being aimlessly led astray here and there. Indeed, monks have not come into this desert in order to inflate their minds, whilst standing in the presence of God, with the singing of Psalms and keeping rhythm with melodies by swinging their hands and tapping their feet. Rather, it behooves us to offer our prayers to God with

fear and trembling, tears and sighs, and for our voices to be sober, contrite, measured, and humble.

"For I assure you, my child," Abba Pambo continued, "that the day will come in which Christians will abandon the books of the Holy Gospel, the Holy Apostles, and the God-inspired Prophets, and scrape away Holy Scripture from the parchments** on which they are written, writing in their place *Troparia* and Greek verse. And their minds, then, will be fixed on that which distances them from the Holy Scriptures. For this reason, the Fathers have given to us—those living the ascetic life in this desert—a command that we not write the lives and words of the Fathers on parchment, but on paper; because the coming generation might erase the lives of the Fathers from parchment and rewrite whatever they wish. That is to say, there will be great need of these in the future."

The brother again asked Abba Pambo:

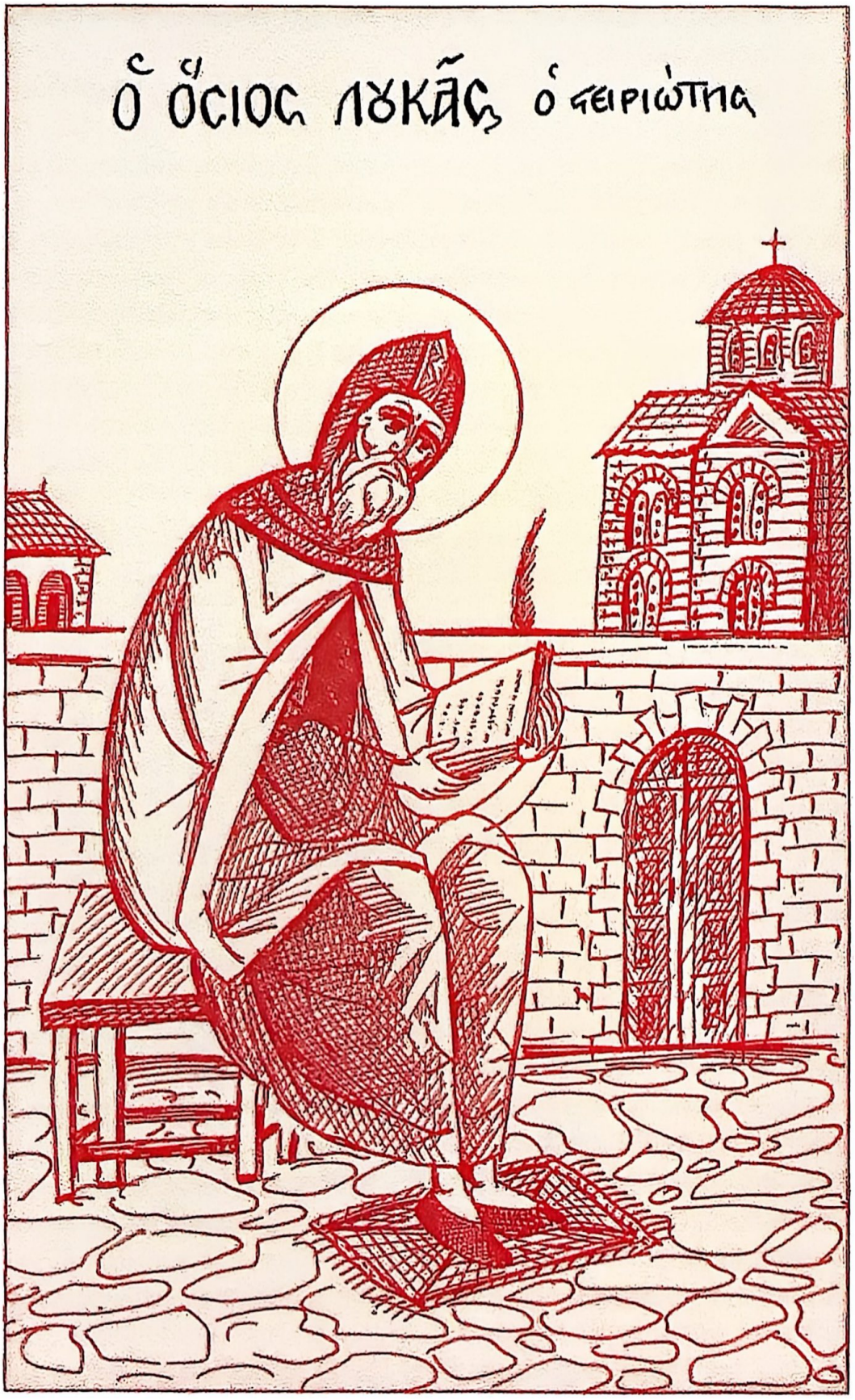
"What then? Will they change the customs and the traditions of us Christians? And will there be no Priests in the Churches, that these things should happen?"

And the Elder replied: "In those times, the love of many will have become cold; and there will be no small tribulation, disputes between nations and the migration of populations, instability among kingdoms, extravagance among Priests, and laziness in monks. The Abbots will show indifference to their salvation and to their flocks. All of the monastics will be anxious to run to the refectory; they will be quarrelsome, lazy in prayer, and eager to slander; they will be quick to find fault with the Elders and their words, neither paying them heed nor emulating them, but rather vilifying them and saying, 'If we were in their age, then we would be struggling, too.'

"The Bishops in those days," Abba Pambo continued, "will fear the powerful and will judge them in accordance with the donations which they receive from them. They will not defend the poor, when they ask for what is rightly theirs; they will cause grief to widows; and they will oppress orphans. And among the faithful there will come disbelief, hatred, malice, envy, and contentiousness; the people will be accustomed to cheating and drunkenness."

And the brother asked anew: "And what must one do in such times?"

To this, the Elder answered: "My child, in those days, let him who wishes to be saved rescue his soul, and he shall be made great in the Kingdom of Heaven."



St. Luke of Steirion

B. From the Life of St. Luke the New

Once St. Luke visited an acquaintance of his, a very worthy man and the Abbot of a flock of God-loving men. Having spent three days with them, he was overcome by the desire for the desert and his hut; he thus asked for permission to leave. But the Superior, his host, would not allow this. He desired the companionship of the man and did not want him to leave, since the feelings between those who love God are intense, and even stronger than the feelings of love between those who are related by blood. Since St. Luke would not relent, but persistently asked to return to the desert, the Superior, finding the excuse of a certain great Feast, approached him and said to him rather sternly, on account of the desire that surged in his soul:

"How long will you insist so obstinately that you prefer the desert over Church services? And especially now, when such a great Feast is already upon us and on account of which, since you will not be at the Liturgy, you will bring such great damage on yourself?"

To this the God-Bearing Luke replied with his well-known, blessed simplicity:

"My good teacher, blessed shepherd, you exhort me rightly; however, the Canons and readings, while we must indeed take heed after them, and all of the Church services, where do they lead? And what is their goal? Above all, as you yourself teach, they lead to the fear of God and elevate those who are zealous. He, then, who has taken care to have the fear of God in his heart, does he have any need of these things of which you speak?"

Hearing this, the Superior was greatly amazed at the Saint and his arguments. Not wanting to delay him any longer, he gave him leave to return to his cell.

C. From St. Diadochos

When the soul dwells in the abundance of its *natural* fruits, it then sings with a somewhat louder voice and desires to pray aloud; but when the soul is endowed with the *energy of the Holy Spirit*, then it sings with total gratitude and sweetness, praying with the whole heart. In the first instance, there follows a warm joy, whereas in the second, spiritual tears, and after these a certain internal joyfulness, which creates in the heart the love of silence.

That is, the mind is warmed by that which is imprinted on the soul,

and various sweet thoughts, which evoke tears, are made to enter into the heart. From all of this, one can indeed behold implanted in the soil of the heart the seeds of prayerful tears, which, however, occasion joy in the hope of reaping. Thus, when we are overcome by a great affliction, we should sing with a slightly subdued voice, striking the chords of the soul with the hope of joy, until that heavy cloud is dispersed by the zephyr of our melody.

D. From Abba Cassian

All of the cœnobitic monasteries of the East, and especially of Egypt, observe the following order in their prayers and psalmody. When the brothers gather at the time for services, as soon as the Psalms are finished, they do not immediately kneel. Rather, before bending their knees, they stand for a short time upright, praying with their hands upraised. After this, they all fall to the ground and pray again, kneeling; thereupon, they all rise together and, raising their hands again, complete their supplications for some time more and with greater effort. No one kneels, or rises from a kneeling position, until the one presiding at the service has first knelt or risen.

Now, as I saw myself, when the monks gather for the services to which I have referred, such quiet is observed by all, that one would think that not a single person was present at this gathering of a great number of brothers. Especially at the time of prayer, neither does anyone sputter, nor is a cough heard, nor is any laziness to be observed—not even a yawn from weariness; nor do any audible groans come forth from anyone's chest. For it is said that one who carries out his prayer with indolence of mind and unmelodious noises sins twice: first because he is praying without spiritual desire, and second because, with his uncouth voice, he not only disturbs the hearing of those in attendance, but distracts their minds. Then they are attacked by evil spirits, who, when they see us standing in prayer, weigh down the soul with inappropriate thoughts and sloth.

For this reason precisely, the monks of the cœnobitic monasteries of the East are careful to read the Psalms without making noise and without annoyance, experiencing spiritual joy, not from multifarious verses, but from the deep contrition of concentration on the readings, in keeping with the saying: "I shall chant with the soul, while chanting also with the mind." For they consider it far more beneficial to chant ten verses, but with the mind captured by their meaning, than a whole

Psalm when the mind is scattered.

When the Psalms and the Canon (the Matins service) end, not one of the brothers, as we noted previously, dares to stand around and converse with someone else, even for a short time; but having gone to his cell, each immediately continues the work assigned to him, fulfilling the Apostolic command. And anyone who does not get to the services of the third, sixth, and ninth hour on time for the reading of the first Psalm, moreover, does not venture into the place of prayer or dare take his place in the choir of Chanters, but stands aright at the doors of the Church and waits for the dismissal of the brothers. As they all exit the service, he kneels and asks their forgiveness for his indolence. During the gathering for the nighttime services, forgiveness is bestowed upon those who failed to arrive until the second Psalm.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios the Great, when the Church was made free, told the brothers: "Flee, brethren."

Thereupon, one of the Elders asked him:

"Father, where can we go that is more removed than this desert?"

In response, Abba Makarios, pointing to his mouth with his finger, said:

"Flee from this." And afterwards, he went into his cell, closed the door, and sat down.

2. It is said of St. Sisoes the Thebite that, as soon as the Church was declared free, he immediately ran to his cell. He walked hastily, as though someone were chasing him. A number of the brothers, seeing him leave in this way, said: "He is demonized." He, however, since he was carrying out the work of God, paid no attention to those who spoke against him.

3. A brother consulted Abba Silouan: "What must I do, Abba?" he asked of him. "How can I attain to repentance, for I am beset by laziness, by sleep, and by grumbling. When I rise from sleep, I struggle greatly with my psalmody, yet I cannot overcome my weariness, let alone recite a Psalm without music [i.e., chant a Psalm without a melody, rather than simply monotonically—*Trans*]. "

To this the Elder replied: "My child, to recite a Psalm with music is, firstly, arrogant; for this makes you think, 'I sing, but my brother does

not.' Secondly, this hardens your heart and does not allow you to feel contrition.

"If, therefore, you want to feel contrition, set aside singing, and when you are standing, doing your prayers, let your mind seek the spiritual power of the verse. Think to yourself that you are standing before God, Who examines the hearts and the reins—that is, all of the external things of the world. When you wake from sleep, before all else, glorify God; afterwards, recite the Symbol of Faith and the 'Our Father' [the Lord's Prayer—*Trans.*], and then begin your canon, free of every worldly thought, sighing and bringing to mind your sins, as well as Hell, in which you may be tortured in the future."

The brother again addressed the Elder:

"I, my Abba, from the time that I became a monk, have sung the Canon and the hours, in keeping with the *Octoechos.*"***

The Elder replied to him: "And for this reason contrition and spiritual sorrow have left your soul. Think of the fact that the great Fathers, even though they were unlearned and were familiar neither with tones nor *Troparia*, but only a few Psalms, shined forth like sages to the world. Such were St. Paul the Simple, Abba Apollo, and other God-bearing Fathers, who even raised the dead, performed many miracles, and were given authority by God over demons. All of this they accomplished, not with singing, *Troparia*, and tones, but with prayer that came forth from a contrite heart and with fasting, by which they perpetually maintained a fear of God in their hearts, strengthened by spiritual sorrow, which cleanses a man of every sin and makes his mind whiter even than snow.

"Indeed, song has brought many down to the depths of the earth—not only laymen, but Priests—since it softens their manly character and thrusts them into immorality and indecent passions. Song, then, is for the worldly, who, by way of singing, are gathered in the Churches. Think, my child, about how many ranks there are in Heaven; yet not of a single one of them is it said, in the Holy Scriptures, that they sing according to the *Octoechos*. One rank sings unceasingly, 'Alleluia,'**** another, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth,'***** and yet another, 'Blessed be the Glory of the Lord from His place and dwelling.' You, my child, should thus imitate the Fathers, if you wish to attain contrition by your prayers and to keep your mind—as much as you can—collected and not given over to daydreaming. Love the humility of Christ and, wherever you go, do not appear to be intelligent and a teacher, but illiterate and a student. And God will grant you contrition."

4. An Elder said: "Those who pray to God would do well to pray with peace, great quiet, and in a pious position; they should not use inappropriate cries and unclear words that confuse both them and those with them, but should devote themselves to the Lord with a broken heart and pure words. By prayer and contrition there comes about the same thing that happens to those who pursue therapy for some bodily ailment. Namely, there are certain sick people who, when they undergo cauterization or surgery, withstand their pain with gallant patience, without crying or becoming agitated but forcing themselves to endure silently the pain of the medical procedure. Others, on the other hand, though undergoing the very same therapeutic procedure as the aforementioned, nevertheless emit unseemly screams and become agitated. Yet, both the one who screams and the one who does not yell out feel the same pain. Precisely this happens in the case of those praying and those seeking contrition.

"There are some who pray silently and maintain the mood of the heart more or less undistracted; others, again, cannot control themselves, but pray with commotion and noise, such that they are, indeed, a cause of scandal to those who hear them. However, the servant of God should never act in a disorderly way, but should maintain humility of mind and silence at all times, as the Prophet says: 'And to whom will I have respect, but to the humble and meek, and the man that trembleth at my words?' (Isaiah 66:2). For those who demonstrate such in their behavior build themselves up in the Faith, as well as those who behold them."

F. From St. Ephraim

To go before everyone else to the monastic gatherings for services is good and salvific; to leave without cause, however, is injurious and ruinous. Be patient, then, and listen to the Holy Scriptures, so as to be benefited. For just as a cold glass of water is pleasing to a traveller when the weather is hot, so Divine words bedew the soul. If you wish to hear, be patient; and if you listen, you will become wise. If, however, you find it difficult to exercise patience in hearing the word, will it not be far more difficult for you to be patient in your actions? By this, then, know yourself, that you are lazy, as am I. When we enter the House of God, we must let every aimless delusion of our minds flee and let our inner man heed contemplation and prayer; and let us not distract our minds with various evil thoughts.

Let us bring to mind before Whom it is that we stand when we pray, and let our whole soul be inclined towards Him, without imagining any other thing. Try to grasp what I have said by way of the following example: If a person takes a sack of money in hand and goes to the cattle market to buy oxen, will he diligently attend to the swine? If, again, he wishes to purchase donkeys, will he go looking for dogs? All of his attention will be focused on that which he wishes to purchase, and that alone will he examine with care, so that he be not cheated and so that he not carelessly lose the money which he has in hand.

So, then, when we go to the holy Church and stand before God, let us raise all of our thoughts to Him and let us attend only to those things which refer to Him, thinking only on these, so that we might gain thereby our salvation and enjoy the good things of Heaven. And not even a simple word let us exchange with the person next to us, lest by chance, instead of appeasing *the Maker of Heaven and earth,* we give, rather, comfort *to this person.*

That is, just like someone who, being before a king and conversing with him—something that is an honor and privilege—breaks off his conversation with the king, when a fellow servant happens to call him, and turns to talk with this fellow servant, insults the king by his manner and invites his fearful indignation, so is that individual who talks during the time of prayer and psalmody. It behooves us, then, to stand during the psalmody in the manner of the Angels, with great trembling and praising the Creator. If it happens that the brother standing next to you is ill and coughs or sputters continuously, do not be disturbed by this. Bring to mind the fact that many are dedicated to the care of lepers and the infirm, in order to gain, thereby, many spiritual gifts and to learn, by experience, love, and sympathy (for the ill).

Furthermore, when, bearing the same body, you are near such infirm individuals—even if for the present time your body is healthy, by the love of God for man—do not take pride at the cost of the sick man, but take fear lest the same thing befall you, or even worse; and thus, by your sympathy for your brother, guard yourself.

* This is a reference to the Cathedral Church in Alexandria, dedicated to the Holy Apostle Mark, who was the founder of the Alexandrian Church. [St. Mark is believed by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Copts to have been the first Bishop of Alexandria. According to tradition, this Cathedral was built on the site of a Church established and constructed by the Apostle himself. After his martyrdom *ca.* 68 A.D., his body was buried beneath it. In the ninth century, his Relics were either stolen or (according to some sources) purchased by Venetian sailors, taken to Italy, and eventually enshrined in the famous Basilica of St. Mark in Venice. In 1968, Pope Paul VI, on behalf of the

Roman Catholic Church, returned a large portion of the Relics of St. Mark to the Coptic Orthodox Church—*Trans.*].

** During this period, when scribes used parchment and papyrus for paper, it often happened that, when they ran short of these materials, they would scrape off whatever was written on them and write other things. Thus, from papyri on which the works of ancient Greek authors were inscribed, they scraped off the latter and inscribed Christian books; but sacred books, too, were scraped off by heretics, so that they could record their beliefs. Parchment was manufactured from animal fetuses. Owing to a shortage of parchment, texts would be scraped off ancient parchments and new ones (palimpsests) would be inscribed. Paper was produced from leaves of the Egyptian papyrus plant or from its pith. It was impossible to scrape an old text off paper codices and to write a new one over it.

*** The *Octoechos* or *Parakletike* is the best-known book of our Church, containing *Troparia* and Canons in the eight tones [modes—*Trans.*] that are chanted in succession and according to a specific rule in the Orthodox Church.

**** *"Alleluia"* is a Hebrew word and means "praise ye God."

***** *"Sabaoth"* is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew word *"Tsebaoth"* [or *"Tsabaoth"*—*Trans.*]. Its meaning is best captured by the Greek word *"Pantokrator"* ("Ruler of All").

Hypothesis XII

We should reprove those who talk idly or converse with each other in the Divine services; and if they do not correct themselves, we should sternly eject them from the Church.

A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

St. John the Great made sure to correct as much as he could those who talked heedlessly in Church. If he saw that someone remained uncorrected after the first and second counsel, he immediately threw him out of the Church and repeated to him the words of the Master Christ: "The house of God must be a house of prayer." Conversely, those who showed interest in the services, and followed them with reverence and compunction, he received with joy, as lovers of God, and praised them, even honoring them with various ecclesiastical appointments.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "If anyone, at the time of services, whether there be many or few people in the Church, closes his mouth so as not to chant to God, he does the work of demons; for since the demons cannot stand to hear the praise of Christ, it is they who suppress those who are chanting."

2. Abba Evagrios said: "It is a great thing for anyone to pray undistracted; but it is better to chant without distractions."

C. From St. Ephraim

My brother, if you stand in the house of the Lord (the Church) for spiritual worship, you should be eager to take part in the chanting; but if you are silent, I too shall be silent, and our neighbor will be silent; and then, of necessity, the chanting will stop. But this should not happen. For if those who are acclaiming a ruler or king, when they are standing in the theater, push away and then chase off anyone in their midst who is not cheering with them in a loud voice, because they consider him

unworthy to stand there, ought we not all the more, when we stand before the Master of Heaven and earth, chant with eagerness and with appropriate vigor the hymnody that befits Him?

Be careful, brother, that you do not occasion to disturb a group of ascetics, when they are standing and chanting in praise of the Lord, lest Divine wrath and chastisement fall upon your head. For that anyone should sin against God is fearful and unforgivable, "and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," according to Holy Scripture (I Corinthians 14:32); for God is not a God of disorder, but a God of peace and order.

D. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Psalmody [i.e., chanting Psalms and hymns—*Trans.*] is the work of the Bodiless Powers, who stand beside God and praise Him unceasingly, as the Psalmist says: "Praise the Lord from the heavens.... Praise ye Him, all His Angels; praise ye Him, all His Hosts" [Psalm 148:1-2]. This is also required of all men; for, as the Psalmist again says: "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" [Psalm 150:6]. Especially is this required of monks, who have chosen and who follow the Angelic life. Scripture says: "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him" [Psalm 21:24].

Psalmody, then, is an unceasing sacrifice and a sacrifice of praise, as Scripture says: "A sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me" [Psalm 49:23]. For this reason, we monks ought constantly and unceasingly to offer to God the doxologies that have been enjoined by Him, in this way heeding David, who exhorts us to this, saying: "Sing praises to our God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises; ...sing ye praises with understanding" [Psalm 46:7-8]; "Sing skillfully unto Him with jubilation" [Psalm 32:3]; "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee, and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed" [Psalm 70:23]; "His praise is in the congregation of the Saints" [Psalm 149:1]; "Let the sons of Sion exult in their King" [Psalm 149:2]; "I will sing and give praise in my glory" [Psalm 107:1]; "My heart grew hot within me, and while I was musing a fire was kindled" [Psalm 38:4]; "So will I bless Thee while I live, and I will lift up my hands in Thy name. Let my soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips" [Psalm 62:5-6]; "And Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy delight" [Psalm 35:9] "who sing praise unto Thee" [Psalm 56:10].

But what need is there for us to cite the testimonies which David of-

fers concerning psalmody, or to speak about the joy and gladness that are born in the heart of him who chants with compunction and attention? Those who have experience of this matter are quite familiar with such a state. Let us stand, then, brethren, with reverence in psalmody and prayer, fleeing the preoccupations which our thoughts and material concerns provoke in us. For when the demons see someone who chants or prays with eagerness, they are accustomed to placing in his mind certain thoughts of earthly things, which are supposedly necessary, turning his mind to the resolution of these matters, with the goal of luring it away from its recollection and making it lose the sweetness of its psalmody.

For this reason, Christ perfects praise from the mouths of infants, that is, of those who through want of any evil in their hearts resemble infants, so that by this psalmody He may destroy the Enemy who tyrannizes us and the Devil who wreaks vengeance on the human race, who is the enemy of all virtues and the champion of evil.

When we praise the Lord with simplicity, we crush and render useless all the machinations of the Devil. Let our psalmody be unceasing; for when the name of God is merely mentioned, it chases the demons far away. I must, however, remind you of this point as well: that our psalmody is called a canon, as you yourselves also know. Just as a farmer, if he does not fulfill completely and properly his "canon," that is, his obligation, suffers many punishments, is kept in prison, suspended and flayed, until he returns his debt in full, so also the monk, when he neglects his canon, is immediately abandoned by Divine Grace and is delivered to his enemies and trampled under their feet.

E. From Abba Isaiah

Brethren, do not talk at all, except out of great necessity, in the refectory, or in the services, and do not correct anyone who chants, unless he asks you. For if he makes a mistake in one word and passes over it, he has passed over a simple word. Do not immediately tell him his mistake and agitate him. But if he says to you, "Please, tell me my mistake," then you should indicate it to him.

F. From St. Ephraim

Brother, if you do not want to build, at least do not overturn what has been built; if you do not want to plant, do not uproot what has been

planted; that is, when you are standing in the services and do not want to chant to the Lord, do not bother the Chanters. When a rich man speaks, all are silent, so that his speech might be heard as far as the clouds. And when God speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures, should we not desire to be silent and listen? Yet, one man talks, another feels drowsy, and another lets his mind wander away in thoughts. But what does Holy Scripture say about this? "He who turneth away his ear so as not to hear the laws of the Most High, will be abominable before God, as will his prayer" [*cf.* Proverbs 28:9].

The negligent monk, at the time of prayer, is in a hurry to hear the "Amen"; but he who prays with attention and a pure mind does not get bored or irritated. Let us be sure that what the Prophet said does not apply to us as well: "Thou art close to their lips, but far from their hearts" [*cf.* Isaiah 29:13]. O monk, when your brethren are standing in the service, they are blessing God—yet you are obviously occupied with other things. Do you not know that you are harming yourself? Say to your thoughts: "If money were being offered or some other material goods, would we not be the first to run after them? And if we show such interest in things of the flesh, should we not show it much more in things of the spirit?"

Be fervent in spirit, as were the Saints, that you might be with them in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Hypothesis XIII

That we should always keep vigil and should only sleep for as long as is necessary to keep our bodies healthy; and that beginners in asceticism should use any contrivance to accustom themselves to staying awake.

A. From the Life of St. Ephraim

The nights often found St. Ephraim the Great awake, delivering him, still awake, to the light of day. It was as if the Saint, fearing lest the Prince of Darkness should catch him in the fetters of sleep, remained awake in order to face his onslaught. An extremely short period of sleep was sufficient for him; he simply tasted of it and did not take undue advantage of it. He slept only as much as was indispensable for him to keep his body healthy and to maintain it, since he submitted it to a great deal of sweat and toil. He would banish sleep from his eyes in many different ways; in particular, he would sleep completely spread out on the ground, toughening his body and subjecting it to every sort of torment and ill-treatment.

B. From the Life of St. Pachomios

1. If St. Palamon, the teacher of St. Pachomios the Great, ever saw Pachomios weighed down with sleep during their night prayers, he would go out with him to the mountain; and after they had filled their baskets with the sand found there, they would carry it from place to place and empty it out. In this way, they succeeded in keeping their bodies and drowsy minds alert for prayer and psalmody.

The Elder would say to him: "Stay awake, Pachomios, lest the tempter vex you and our toil go to waste."

Pachomios was even in the habit, when standing at prayer, of stretching out his hands and not lowering them at all. By keeping his hands spread out in this way, as if he were stretched out on a cross, he wearied his body, in order to keep his soul in a state of unsleeping attentiveness.

2. It was said of Abba Sarmatas that, by his constant practice of fasting and abstinence, he overcame sleep to such an extent that, if he said to sleep, "Go," it would depart; and when he said to it, "Come," it would come.

C. From Abba Isaiah

"Brother, keep your vigil properly and do not deprive your body of necessary care. Fulfill your religious obligations with moderation and prudent knowledge, lest your soul become dizzy from too little sleep and withdraw from the arena of struggle. It is sufficient for you to think about how physical labors (which are spawned by an awareness of one's duties) are products of the virtues, while the offspring of the passions arise from negligence. Love of excess banishes knowledge, whereas love of labor is inimical to the passions (sloth effortlessly brings on the passions).

"Do not, therefore, seek after periods of rest, brother, as long as you are in this body, and do not trust yourself, if you see that you are enjoying some temporary relief from the passions. For a man's enemies cunningly restrain themselves for a short time, in the hope that, by supposing that he is now at rest, he will leave his heart unprotected; then, they suddenly pounce on his hapless soul and carry it off like a sparrow. And if they overcome his soul, they humiliate it unrelentingly with every type of sin, more so than did the sins for which the man sought forgiveness at the beginning of his repentance.

"Let us stand up, then, with fear of God, and let us be attentive in fulfilling our religious duties, observing all of the virtues, which obstruct the evil of our enemies. For the labors and toils of our brief sojourn here on earth not only preserve us from evil, but these very exertions also prepare crowns for the soul even *before* it departs from the body. For our Lord and Teacher, knowing the great ruthlessness of the enemies of our souls, and out of compassion for our race, enjoined us somewhat austerely: 'Be ready at all times, for ye know not what hour the thief doth come, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep' (*cf.* St. Matthew 24:42-43; St. Mark 13:36); and again: 'And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that hour come upon you unawares' (St. Luke 21:34).

"When the Lord sent out His Disciples—since He knew that if a man has not taken anything from his enemies, that is, any passion, the Enemy

cannot defeat him—He said to them: 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; take nothing for your journey' (St. Matthew 10:16; St. Mark 6:8; St. Luke 9:3). For as long as they took anything from the wolves (sin or passion), they would be unable to escape from them. So, the Disciples having returned healthy (pure and sinless), since they had kept His commandment ('take nothing for your journey'), He rejoiced with them and gave thanks on their account to God the Father.* In order to strengthen their hearts, He said to them: 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and they shall not by any means hurt you' (St. Luke 10:18-19).

"The Lord sent out His Disciples, therefore, by instilling fear in them and warning them to take heed, lest they be led astray. When they had fulfilled their commandment, then He gave them authority and power. These are not words that concern only them; but they also concern all who carry out the commandments. And again, in order to strengthen them, lest they suffer grief in their afflictions, when He was bestowing His Grace upon their hearts, He said to them: 'Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations' (St. Luke 22:28); that is, those who cling to the branches of the tree until they are cut off.

"He said these things to them as He was on His way to ascending the Cross: 'And I,' He says, 'appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom' (St. Luke 22:29-30). He, then, who wishes to eat and drink at the Lord's table, let him journey with Him to the Cross. For the Cross of Jesus is hardship and abstinence from all of the passions, until they are extirpated. When the Apostle Paul had uprooted them, he made bold to say: 'I am crucified with Christ; no longer do I live, but Christ liveth in me' (Galatians 2:20). And again he says: 'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts' (Galatians 5:24). Writing to Timothy, he said: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us' (II St. Timothy 2:12). Who are those who deny Him? Assuredly, they are those who do the will of the flesh and betray the Holy Baptism through which we were granted remission of our sins.

"We have repentance even after Holy Baptism; for if there were no repentance, no one could be saved. Since the Apostle knew that even after Baptism there would be those who would sin, he said: 'Let him that stole steal no more' (Ephesians 4:28). As long as we have the seal of Holy Baptism, then, let us make haste to forsake our sins, so that we

may find mercy on that day (of the Second Coming). For He is drawing near and coming, seated on His glorious Throne, and all of the tribes will be gathered before Him, and each person will reveal who he is from his own lamp, which he has kindled from the practice of the virtues. Whoever does not have oil, his lamp will be extinguished and he will be cast into the darkness; he whose lamp is shining will enter with Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Let us be sure, brethren, to fill our vessels with oil, as long as we are in the body, so that our lamps may shine. Our vessels are the powers of our soul, which contain the virtues, and the oil that we must put in them is the practice of all the virtues. The shining lamp symbolizes the mind, which is capable of receiving Divine illumination. Whichever soul becomes radiant with good deeds will enter with Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven; but that which is darkened by doing the works of darkness or by neglecting good deeds will depart into the darkness, which it prepared for itself by what it did."

The same Abba Isaiah said: "Despise all worldly things and bodily rest, because these things make you an enemy of God. Just as a man who has an enemy makes war on him, so also should we make war on our bodies, so as not to give them any respite. For, the ancient Fathers called fleeing the weaknesses of the body and meditation on death the point of departure [for spiritual growth—*Trans.*]."

D. From Abba Mark

Our Lord Jesus Christ, being God and making provision as He knows best for the salvation of all mankind, laid down the commandment of freedom in various teachings. He prescribed as the single goal of freedom one which is appropriate for all people, expressing it by means of the word "repent." From this, we should understand that the diversity of commandments points to a single goal: that of repentance. Repentance, in my estimation, is not confined to particular times or deeds, but is put into practice to the extent that the commandments of Christ are fulfilled. Some of the commandments are very concise; many of them, that is, pertain to a specific situation, though with a single application they cut down many evils. For this reason, those who love God and are firm in their faith compel themselves to put specific commandments into practice; yet, they do not neglect the many others, when the occasion arises to apply them.

For everyone, then, young and old, the struggle for repentance is

continuous until death; for the Redeemer of our souls established a single requirement for all, which encompasses all of the commandments, when He told the Apostles: "Say to them, Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" [*cf.* St. Matthew 10:7]. In this way, He ordained together all of the commandments by which repentance is accomplished, and He prescribed that they be carried out until death: "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall find it in eternal life" (St. Mark 8:35; St. Matthew 10:39). And He exclaims: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matthew 5:19). If, therefore, Christ commanded that we should struggle for repentance until death, as we have demonstrated from the foregoing sayings of Scripture, then he who maintains that he has attained perfect repentance before death (and can, as a result, afford to relax his efforts) annuls this commandment by not taking death into account.

But you will say to me: "Those who have truly pleased God and approached perfection, of what repentance are they still in need?" I reply to you: "I agree that there have been, or are, such people; but pay attention, and you will understand how these, too, are in need of repentance. The Lord said that falsehood derives from the Devil; and He considered it adultery for one to look on a woman, 'to lust after her,' (St. Matthew 5:28); and He likened anger against one's neighbor to murder."

Who, now, will be able to assert that he knows nothing of falsehood, that he has never been assaulted by the lust of the eyes (I St. John 2:16), that he has never been angry with his neighbor without good reason, and that he has never been found guilty of idle talk, such that he is not in need of repentance? For even if he is not guilty now, he has nonetheless been guilty at some time in the past; and, consequently, he is duty bound to cultivate repentance until he dies. But nature, too, teaches us not to abandon repentance until we die. A rational mind is incapable of remaining inert. Indeed, when it is perfect and in good condition, it still works on the right [on the side of good—*Trans.*]. Yet if, on the pretext of being perfect, it ceases from doing good deeds, then it will assuredly incline to the left [to the side of evil—*Trans.*]. If it refrains from evil, it will naturally be attracted again towards the good. Working for the good—for beginners, for those who have made some progress, and for the perfect, alike—consists in prayer, the suppression of evil thoughts, and patience in afflictions. Without these, we cannot succeed in the re-

maining commandments, by which our repentance becomes worthy of acceptance.

Examine carefully those who from the beginning of time have passed on from this life and you will discover that none of them was justified, unless he gave heed to repentance, and that none of them was condemned, unless he was indifferent to it. Since the Devil does not cease to war against us, our repentance should never come to an end. And even if we should struggle in repentance until death, not even then will we have fulfilled our duty; for we have done nothing that would make us worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, just as we naturally eat, drink, and talk, so also we have a natural need to repent. He who is judged worthy of death dies once, in accordance with the law; but the life that he lives, he lives through faith for the sake of repentance, if not on account of his own sin, at least by virtue of ancestral sin (*cf.* Romans 6:10).

When we were Baptized, we were cleansed from responsibility for original sin. After we were cleansed, we received commandments. He, then, who does not fulfill these commandments defiles his Baptism, for he forgets that he has been cleansed of his former sins, of which no one, on a daily basis, finds himself free, even if he has not neglected any of the commandments. It is for this reason that repentance is absolutely necessary for everyone until the end. He who sets limits on repentance turns back and repeats his former sins. The faithful Abraham and the righteous Job called themselves earth and ashes; these words are proof of their humility. But he who has deviated from repentance cannot be humble-minded.

The Three Youths,** who were great Martyrs, confessed and said, in the midst of the burning fire, that they had sinned and transgressed, and they repented for whatever sins they had committed. They were perfect, and yet almost their entire hymn vibrates with repentance. So, if they, who were exceedingly pleasing to God and whom events showed to be perfect, had recourse to repentance until death, how could anyone thereafter, on the pretext of his virtue, trust in himself and scorn repentance? That is to say, I think that if there were someone as holy as Paul or Peter, not even then would he decide to forsake that which engenders humble-mindedness. For this reason, Peter himself approached Cornelius*** and said to him, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:26), while Paul, after reaching the conclusion that the Grace which had been given him by Christ could, because of his unworthiness, abandon him, even up to his death said, "I follow after, if that I may appre-

hend that for which also I am apprehended of the Lord" (Philippians 3:12). By "apprehension," he meant perseverance until his departure from the body.

Tell me, then: whatever strength of godliness our human nature has, are we not obligated to offer it all to God every day? I am sure you will answer me: "Yes, since God has bestowed this on our nature and enjoined the commandments in proportion to our strength." "Not so," I reply: "The good which we offer Him today is what we owe on this day. Show me, beyond this, the recompense of the former sins which you committed. I tell you that not only can you not show this, but you cannot even render your daily obligation consistently; and this is clear from the fact that we do not always remain steadfast in the same virtues.

"For to the extent that you add to your virtue today, to this extent are you proved to be in debt to the previous day, since you have made the strength of your nature manifest. That is to say, by what you have added to your virtue today, you show that your deficiency yesterday was not due to nature, but to choice; and since progress in the virtues depends on our choice, this is why we are under the influence of sin."

A heart that inclines towards pleasure is a prison and a chain for the soul at the time of its departure; whereas, the heart which loves the labor of virtue is an open door. Fear of Hell and a longing for Paradise grant us patience in afflictions; and this is not due to us, but to Him Who knows our thoughts.

Just as labors and contempt tend to engender the virtues, so also pleasures and glory generate the vices. He who quarrels with people out of fear, lest he be badly treated or mocked, either suffers more hardship here on earth by adding to his problems, or will be punished without mercy in the future life. He who prefers hardship or disdain for the sake of the truth traverses the Apostolic path, for he has taken up his cross and bound himself with chains; but as for him whose heart endeavors to attend to other matters apart from these two (the cross and the chains), his mind wanders and he falls into the temptation and snare of the Devil.

Without contrition of heart, it is completely impossible for one to be delivered from vice; the heart is rendered contrite by three kinds of abstinence; that is, the arduous restriction of sleep, food, and bodily comfort. For, excessive enjoyment of these things causes sensual gratification, while gratification of the senses gives rise to evil thoughts in the soul; and this is antithetical to prayer and proper service.

E. From Abba Isaac

Just as the fruit of childbirth, which gladdens her who has given birth, is produced by the pangs of labor, so also knowledge of the mysteries of God is engendered by labor in the soul of him who struggles. But in those who are shameful and hedonistic, physical labor produces shame as its fruit. Without purity of mind, the womb (the soul) remains childless and the breasts remain completely dry.

A mind without purity cannot approach the knowledge of God; if it tries, it tires the body out, but without achieving anything. Every comfort is followed by discomfort, and every discomfort endured for God's sake is accompanied by rest. Brighten the beauty of your soul, brother, with tears, fasting, and every other kind of hardship. For affliction that comes about for God's sake is superior to a great task that is accomplished without difficulty; voluntary affliction furnishes proof of unadulterated love, whereas the act of relaxation proceeds from a hardened conscience. For this reason, the Saints were put to the test in afflictions and not in respite. Spiritual work that is performed without exertion is the virtue proper to worldly people, who give alms for outward show and thereby gain nothing for themselves.

But you, who are zealous to emulate the suffering of Christ, struggle within yourself, that you may be counted worthy of tasting His glory. For if we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified with Him (Romans 8:17). That is, if the body does not suffer for the sake of Christ, the mind is not glorified with Him. Bodily ascesis demands that the senses be alert, whereas spiritual ascesis, that is, noetic work, requires that the heart be alert. Just as, in nature, the soul has greater worth than the body, so also the work of the soul is superior to bodily work. And just as, in the beginning, God fashioned the body before He infused it with His breath, that is, prior to creating the soul,**** so also the work of bodily ascesis precedes that of the soul.

F. From St. Ephraim

Brother, be sure to walk willfully on the way that is narrow and full of afflictions [*cf.* St. Matthew 7:14], before walking unwillingly on one that is narrower. Do not cherish bodily rest, lest you find spiritual harm therein.

G. From St. Maximos

Humility and hardship free man from every sin; the former cuts out all the passions of the soul, the latter those of the body. This is clearly what the Blessed David did, as is shown by the words of his prayer to God: "Look upon my lowliness and my toil, and forgive all my sins" (Psalm 24:18).

* This paragraph contains beneficial instruction, for it teaches every "disciple" and "apostle" of the Gospel message how he can bring to a conclusion the spiritual task that has been entrusted to him, when, of course, he keeps the Lord's commandment: "Take nothing for your journey" (St. Luke 9:3).

** The Three Youths who were thrown into the furnace were Ananias, Azarias, and Misael (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego); they refused to worship the golden image which King Nabuchodonosor had set up in the plain of Deïra. The Lord sent an Angel, who transformed the flame of the furnace into dew and preserved the Three Youths, who glorified the Lord in the midst of the flames.

*** Cornelius was a centurion of Roman descent who lived in Palestinian Cæsarea [the Greek text mistakenly calls it Cappadocian Cæsarea—*Trans.*]. St. Peter went to him at the command of God and baptized him; he became a preacher of Christianity and suffered martyrdom (Acts 10:1-48).

**** As Scripture says (Genesis 2:7), "God formed the man of dust of the earth, and breathed upon his face the breath of life, and the man became a living soul." That is to say, God first created the body and then the soul of man.

Hypothesis XIV

Concerning pathological self-love.

A. From Abba Isaiah

He who fears bodily illness does not attain to the measure of his natural aptitude, nor can he acquire the virtues. But if one falls with reverence before God in his every trouble, God can give him relief. If Gideon had not broken the pitchers, he would not have seen the light of the torches that burned within them.* If a man does not disdain his body, he cannot see the light of the Godhead.

B. From St. Maximos

Guard yourself from the mother of evils, self-love, which is an irrational love of the body. From this love of the self, by a kind of specious justification, are born the primary, impassioned, and most common thoughts; that is, those of gluttony, avarice, and vainglory. These thoughts have their origin in the supposedly indispensable needs of the body, and from them all evils are generated. As I have said, then, we must be attentive and must war against self-love with great vigilance. For when self-love is neutralized, all of the thoughts engendered by it are incapacitated. The passion of self-love quietly whispers into the mind of the monk that his body is in pain, and it urges him to take more interest than he should in its good nourishment, supposedly for the sake of providing for and governing the body. In this way, the monk is gradually enticed into falling into the cesspool of hedonism. To the layman, it suggests the thought that he should be more concerned for himself and with the satisfaction of his desires.

Of the passions, some lead the soul into debauchery, others into hatred, and yet others into debauchery and hatred together. Eating a variety of foods and eating dainty foods cause debauchery; avarice and vainglory engender hatred for one's neighbor. The mother of these, self-love, is the cause of them both; opposed to this self-love [*"philautia"—Trans.*] are love [*"agape"—Trans.*] and abstinence. He, then, who is overcome by self-love has all of the passions in his soul. "For no man," says the Divine Apos-

tle, "ever yet hated his own flesh" [Ephesians 5:29], "but keepeth [it] under and bringeth it into subjection" [I Corinthians 9:27], without providing it with anything other than nourishment and coverings—and of these, only such as are indispensable for the maintenance of life. In this way, then, does one love his flesh without passion, as a handmaid of God; he nourishes and cherishes it only as much as is necessary for the satisfaction of its basic needs.

What one loves, that above all is he eager to take care of. If one loves God, he is anxious to do without fail whatever is pleasing to God; if, in turn, he loves his flesh, then he fulfills what gratifies it. Love, chastity, contemplation, and prayer are pleasing to God, whereas the flesh is pleased by gluttony, licentiousness, and whatever increases these passions. For this reason, those who love the flesh cannot be pleasing to God. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). If the mind is inclined to God, it has the body as a slave and it provides it with nothing more than is necessary for life. But if it is inclined to the flesh, it is enslaved to the passions and desires constantly to pander to the flesh.

* Gideon, the son of Joas, was one of the Judges of Israel, who liberated the Hebrews from enslavement to the Midianites, to whom they were subject for seven years, undergoing frequent incursions during that time. At the command of God, Gideon took three hundred men, whom he divided into three groups. Each of these men held a pitcher in his hand, in which there was a lighted torch and a trumpet of horn. These men attacked the Midianites by night, after first breaking the pitchers; they each held their torches in their left hands and sounded the trumpets of horn [which they held in their right hands—*Trans.*]. The Midianites fled in surprise, pursued by Gideon's men, who arrested their leaders and slew them (Judges, Chapter 7).

Hypothesis XV

Concerning the benefit that comes from abstinence, the harm that comes from a lack of abstinence, and the damage caused by the immoderate consumption of wine.

A. From the Life of St. Synkletike

Aside from the other virtues which she possessed, St. Synkletike did not lack that remedy which is salvific for the body; that is, she so loved fasting, that she did not reckon any of the other ascetic practices to be its equal. She believed that it was the safeguard and foundation of the other virtues; and if ever, out of necessity, she ate something more than she was accustomed to eating, she suffered the opposite of what happens to those who eat; that is to say, her face turned yellow and she became debilitated. Just as, therefore, men prune unfruitful branches from trees with many branches, so also she would remove the thorny outgrowths of her mind (inappropriate thoughts) with prayer and fasting; and if any thorny growth flourished for just a short while, she would impose different punishments on herself and would test her body with a variety of labors.

When the Enemy stirred up warfare against her, she would begin by invoking her Master, in prayer, as an ally; and next, she would apply strict asceticism against the Enemy. Thus, she used to eat bread made from bran, and this with great abstemiousness and care, and she would frequently drink no water at all. And against sleep she would struggle assiduously, lying outstretched on the ground. When the Enemy, overcome by these weapons, retreated, she would then moderate the severity of her ascesis. She did this, lest the members of her body should all disintegrate together from excessive and very severe ascesis and lest she fall into danger; for this debility, too, is evidence of defeat. When his weapons have fallen, on what will a general then place his hope for continuing the war? For some, having become totally exhausted through reckless and indiscriminate fasting, have mortally afflicted their bodies and, as if giving up struggle against the foe, have destroyed themselves.

St. Synkletike, though, did not act in this way, but did everything with discernment (discretion). She strove against the Enemy with prayer

and ascesis; and yet, she looked after her body, in order to preserve the tranquillity of her soul. Indeed, when sailors are beset by stormy weather and rough seas, they remain without eating, in order to confront the danger that they have before them. But when they are delivered from the stormy waters, then they receive some respite from their labors and look after their other needs. Nevertheless, not even then do they remain completely free from care, nor do they allow themselves to be overcome by deep sleep, since they have learned from past experience and they take thought for the future. For, although the bad weather has abated, the sea has not diminished; and although what happened has passed, the future is unknown. For this reason, since no one can be certain about the condition of the sea, for his own security he should unceasingly be on the watch.

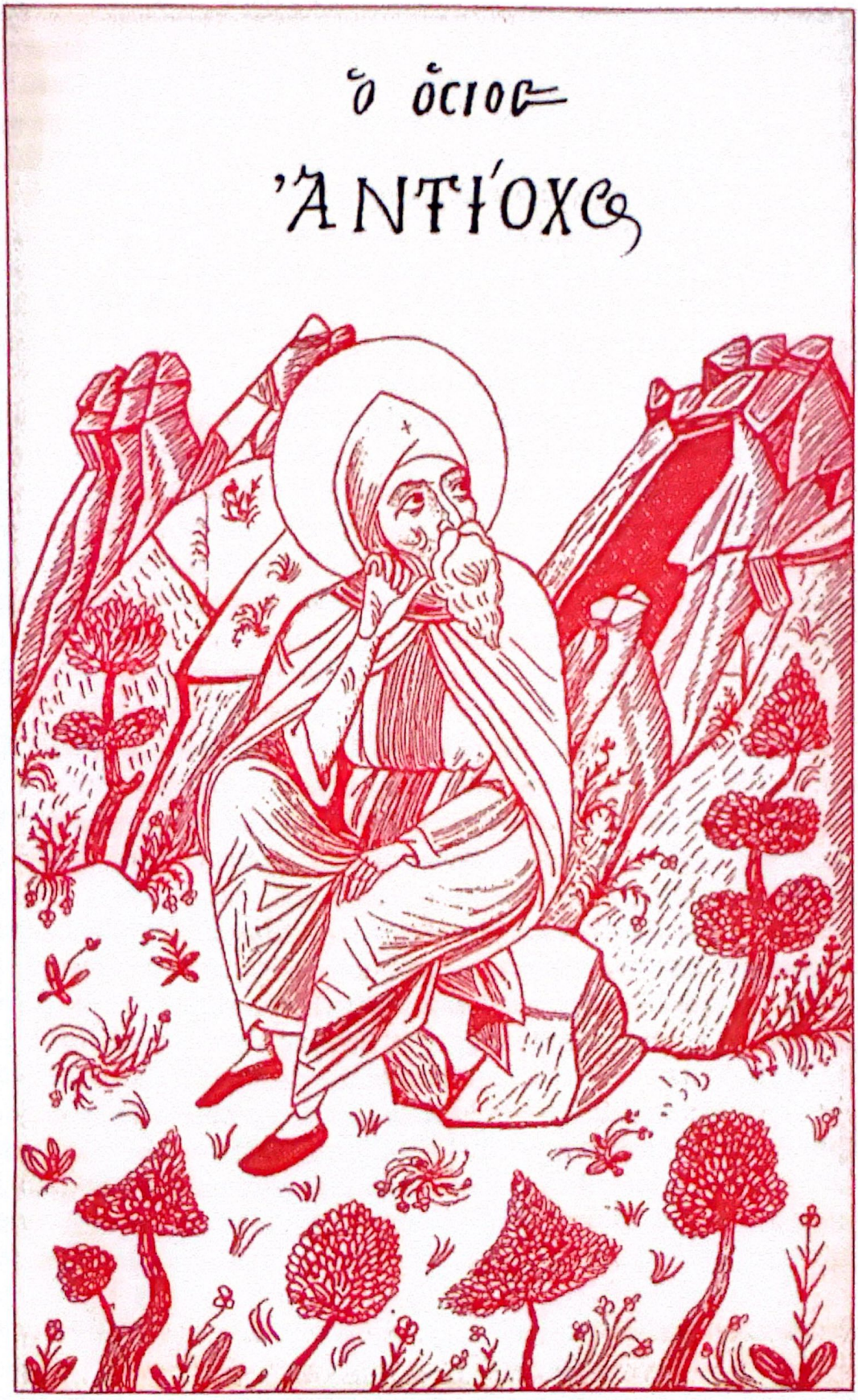
B. From St. Ephraim

Brother, always love abstinence, that you may receive great benefit; but if you begin to be indifferent, you will experience irreparable harm. In the first place, you will turn the Grace of God away from yourself; secondly, those who see you will ridicule you; and thirdly, not even your handiwork will be sufficient for you to meet the great expense that will result from your disdain for abstinence.

If you do this, you will henceforth acquire all the distractions of a peddler and whatever ensues in such cases: lies, injustices, constant travelling, and the flattery of the powerful—and your whole life will be full of cares. Recollection of God will be entirely banished from your mind and, because of this, you will be completely surrendered into the hands of your enemies, who will drag you into the depths of Hell and take you, with themselves, to the everlasting fire. For an excess of eating and drinking gives rise to temporary pleasure, but on the morrow it causes revulsion and totally paralyzes the mind.

C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Control of one's stomach is necessary for everyone, but especially for those who wish to serve God. He who eats without restraint is like an overloaded boat that is easily sunk by the waves. For it is nourishment that the body needs, not dainties, and frugality, not abundance. Nourishment and frugality benefit the soul, since they endow the soul with keenness and purity and the body with health and vigor; con-



St. Antiochos

trariwise, gourmandism and abundance make the mind gross and darken and defile it, while they not only stimulate the body and incite it to shameful desires, but also cause it terrible and unremitting diseases. For this reason, ascetics, who always live frugally, are more intelligent, prudent, and healthier than those who live lives of extravagance and ease.

So then, brothers, let us avoid satiety, lest we kindle the innate fire of the flesh to our greater detriment. Just as he who throws logs on the fire stokes the flames still more, so also he who gives his body a multitude of foodstuffs increases and arouses sinful desire. The same thing happens also with expensive foods; they gratify the gullet for a moment, but feed the unsleeping worm of wantonness.

The gluttonous monk is nothing other than a slave to his belly, who reckons up the Feast Days of the Saints, whereas the abstemious monk emulates their lives. The glutton is gratified by nothing other than his ample and bulging stomach, the repository of his beloved and precious dung. He grieves the Holy Spirit Who dwells within him and drives Him far away from himself; for being unable to tolerate the stench of gluttony, the Spirit flees from him.

Just as smoke drives bees away, so also the glutton drives away the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul says, in this regard: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 15:50). By "flesh and blood," he means the carnal passions, by which the mind slips gradually into a carnal way of thinking. This flesh is food for demons; as the Prophet says: "The wicked draw nigh against me to eat my flesh" (Psalm 26:2).

Therefore, he who completely wears down his flesh by abstinence condemns the demons to great hunger and renders them incapable of warring against him. Such a monk has his mind constantly above earthly things and raised up to Heaven; thus, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, he envisions the beauties that exist above. Outwardly, he appears gloomy and dejected, whereas inwardly he is totally radiant and joyful. The monk who fasts resembles the flower of a palm-tree, which is dark on the outside, but snow-white on the inside, and full of fruit; so, also, the continent monk is outwardly sullen, while in his soul, enlightened by God, he boldly converses with Him.

D. From Abba Isaiah

Just as a sheep does not mate with a wolf in order to bear offspring, so also suffering of heart does not couple with excessive eating in order

to spawn the virtues. One cannot have Godly sorrow and suffering if he does not first cherish the causes of these. Fear of God and the reproof of one's conscience give birth to Godly sorrow, while abstinence and vigil keep company with a suffering heart. The carnal instincts of youth, which fatten a man with different foods and the consumption of wine, make him like a pig that is being prepared for slaughter; in this way, the soul is completely slaughtered by the burning of carnal pleasures and the mind is held captive by the flame of evil desire, so that it cannot resist the pleasures of the flesh. For, an influx of blood (from overeating) brings about an efflux of the spirit.

The young, especially, should not even sniff wine, lest they kindle a twofold conflagration: inwardly, with the influence of the passion (of inebriation) and, outwardly, with an abundance of wine. Overheated thereby, carnal pleasure will drive out from the souls of the young the delight that comes from the labor of compunction and will provoke confusion and callousness in the heart. But if a young man longs for purity and a spiritual way of life, let him scarcely drink his fill even of water; for restriction in the use of water is very conducive to the attainment of chastity.

E. From Abba Isaac

Just as a cloud veils the light of the sun and the moon, so also the vapors of the stomach conceal the wisdom of God from the soul. Just as the flame of a fire sets dry logs ablaze, so also, when the stomach is full, the body is set ablaze (by the passions).

Just as logs, when placed on top of logs, increase the fire, so also a variety of foods increases bodily movements. Knowledge of God does not reside in the hedonist; and he who loves his body will not acquire the Grace of God.

Just as a father looks after his child, so also Christ takes care of the body that undergoes hardship for His sake; and He is always at its side. He helps it and does not allow it to end up falling into sin.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A certain demoniac once went to Sketis. He was not cured, however, even though he spent a long time there, since the Fathers declined, out of extreme humility, to heal him. But one of the Elders, taking pity on him, made the sign of the Cross over the demoniac and at once the

man was healed.

When the demon came forth, having tired himself in resistance to no avail, he said to the Elder: "Now that you have cast me out of this man, I will assail you." "Come," replied the Elder, "it would be my pleasure."

The demon then immediately entered him (I think that the Elder had asked God for this). The Elder had the demon for twelve years, crushing him by his asceticism. For, he used to nibble on twelve date pits every day. Thereafter, the demon departed from him. When the Elder saw him coming out of himself, he said: "Why are you fleeing? Stay here longer." "May God destroy you," the demon replied, "because, apart from Him, no one else has the power to do anything to you."

2. Abba John the Short said: "If a king wants to capture an enemy city, first of all he deprives it of water and food (by laying siege to it), and in this way his enemies, perishing from hunger, are subjugated to him. So it is with carnal passions: if a man spends his life in fasting and virtual starvation, then his adversaries, the passions and the demons, flee, enfeebled, from his soul."

3. Again, the same Elder said: "Who is as strong as the lion? And yet, for the sake of his belly, he falls into a trap and all of his strength is laid low."

4. Abba Poimen said: "If Nabuzardan, the captain of the guard,* had not come, the Temple of God (Solomon's Temple) would not have been burnt down; that is, in allegorical terms, had not the respite afforded by gluttony come into the soul, the mind would not have been overcome in its war with the spiritual enemy."

5. Again, the same Elder said: "When David wrestled with the lion, he grabbed it by the throat and immediately slew it. If we, then, grab our throats and our stomachs—if, that is, we flee from hedonism and gluttony—then we will overcome the invisible lion, with God's help."

6. The same Elder said: "I cannot entirely cut off these three things: food, clothing, and sleep; I can only cut them off partially."

7. Again, he said: "The soul is humbled in no other way than by reducing its allowance of bread; that is, by restricting it only to that sustenance which is absolutely essential."

8. Various individuals related to Abba Poimen, regarding a certain monk, that he did not drink wine. And the Abba answered: "Wine is not at all suitable for monks."

9. Abba Hyperechios said: "For the monk, fasting is a bridle against sin; one who discards fasting is like a wanton stallion."

G. From St. Ephraim

1. The lion is captured alive by its greed, and the glutton is overwhelmed by the gratification of his belly. The glutton labors and strives to fill his belly with choice foods; but when he eats them, he suffers from the difficulty of digesting them. On the contrary, abstinence is accompanied by health and spiritual perspicacity.

2. A vagrant monk will not remain unwounded by Satan, whereas he who endures in his calling (in the difficulties of the monastic life) will assuredly find rest.

3. Abba Daniel said: "The body flourishes to the extent that the soul is enfeebled; the soul flourishes to the extent that the body is enfeebled."

* Nabuzardan was the leader of the bodyguards of King Nabuchodonosor of Babylon, who besieged and captured Jerusalem and burned the Temple of Solomon (IV Kings 25:8-12). [In this saying, there is a pun on the Greek word "*Archimageiros*," or "the captain of the guard," which also means "chief cook"—*Trans.*]

Hypothesis XVI

How the Fathers loved fasting and how they were successful in it; and to what extent they were strict in their observance of it.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Concerning Abba Arsenios, Abba Daniel told us that "the Elder, stayed with us for so many years, and we would give him only one basket* of wheat for the entire year; we, too, ate from it when we went to his cell."

2. The Elder ate fruit—Abba Daniel continued—but once a year, in the autumn. He would say to us of his own accord, "Bring me some fruit," and we would take it to him. Only then did he taste all of the fruit, giving thanks to God. Behold and see how he overcame self-gratification by continence, but also counteracted vainglory and pride by partaking of fruit only once a year.

3. Abba Achillas once visited Abba Isaiah and found him eating. He had put salt and water on his plate, which he hid behind some plaited palm branches when he noticed Abba Achillas coming towards him. As later events proved, he did this out of a spirit of dispensation, so as to avoid scandalizing his visitor; for such a custom did not prevail in Sketis.

Now, when Abba Achillas found him chewing, without there being anything in front of him, he said to him: "Tell me, what were you eating?" "Forgive me," replied Abba Isaiah, "I was cutting palm branches in the heat, and when I came to eat I put bread with salt into my mouth; but the bread did not go down, because my throat was parched from the heat. For this reason, I was compelled to put water on the salt, so as to satisfy my need for sustenance; but forgive me." Abba Achillas then said: "Come and see Isaiah eating soup in Sketis; if you want to eat soup, go to Egypt."

4. Abba Benjamin said: "When we returned to Sketis after the harvest, they brought us a little something from the agricultural products

of Alexandria: about a pint (*xestes*)** of olive oil in vessels sealed up with plaster. The following summer, each of the brothers brought his vessel to the Church with the oil that he had left over. I brought my own vessel, which I had not opened, but which, after making a small hole in it with a needle, I had only tasted; indeed, my heart experienced great joy, supposing that I had achieved something great. But when all of the vessels were gathered together, those of the brothers were found to be completely intact, with the plaster just as it was when the vessels were first given to them, whereas mine had a hole in it. This caused me as much embarrassment as if I had committed fornication."

5. Abba Benjamin, the Presbyter of the Cells, recounted the following story to us: "We once visited a certain Elder in Sketis, to whom we had gone on another occasion. When we wanted to put a little olive oil in the food and eat with the Elder, he said to us: 'Over there is the small vessel of olive oil that you brought me three years ago, and it remains closed, just as you left it; take from it whatever you want.' On hearing this, we marvelled at the strictness of the Elder's way of life."

6. The same Elder said to us: "On another occasion, we visited another Elder, who detained us for a meal;. He set radish oil [a bitter oil made from the seeds of a wild mustard-like plant, the "oilseed radish"—*Trans.*] before us, and we said to him: 'Father, it would be better if you served us a little olive oil.' When he heard this, the Elder made the sign of the Cross and said: 'If there is another kind of oil, other than this, I know nothing of it.'"

7. It was said of Abba Dioscoros that the bread which he ate was made of either barley or lentils. About the same Abba it was also said that every year he began a new type of ascesis. "This year," he would say, "I will not meet with anyone," or "I will not speak at all," or "I will not eat cooked food, or fruit, or vegetables"; and throughout the year he would act in accordance with the limit that he had set for himself. When a year spent in one kind of ascesis had finished, the following year he would start another kind. In this way, he succeeded in acquiring a dispassionate attitude towards all things and in overcoming everything in which he saw himself as being deficient.

8. Abba Isaiah was once visited by a certain brother. The Abba washed the brother's feet, afterwards putting a handful of lentils into a pot

and lighting a fire. When the water began to boil, Abba Isaiah took the pot off of the fire. "Abba," said the brother, "the lentils are not cooked yet." And he replied: "Is it not enough for you that you have seen the fire? This, too, is a consolation."

9. Abba John the Short said: "If the Fathers of Sketis would eat bread and salt, they compelled themselves even to do this; that is to say, they did not even eat these things without restraint. For this reason they had the strength to fulfill the commandments of God."

10. Abba Cassian related how Abba John, the Abbot of a large *cœnobion*, once visited Abba Paisios, who had lived for forty years in the remotest part of the desert. He loved the Elder very much and was able to speak frankly with him; and so, he said to him: "What have you accomplished by living in solitude for so many years, where you are not easily disturbed by people?" Abba Paisios answered: "Since I became a solitary, the sun has never seen me eating." "Nor has it ever seen me angry," replied Abba John.

11. A certain Elder lived as a solitary in the *cœnobion* of St. Theodosios the Cœnobiarch, and for thirty years he observed the following rule: he ate bread and water only once a week and labored constantly; and he never left [early—*Trans.*] from the Church.

12. It was said of Abba Makarios that whenever he had occasion to eat with the brothers, he set the following rule for himself: "If there is wine, drink it for the sake of the brothers; but for every cup of wine, you will not drink water for a whole day." The brothers would give him wine for the sake of refreshment, and the Elder would drink it with joy, in order to goad himself.

But his disciple, who knew about the matter, said to the brothers: "In the Name of God, do not give him wine! For otherwise he will torture himself in his cell."

When the brothers learned this, they did not offer him wine anymore.

13. About Abba Mark the Anchorite it was said that he performed the following spiritual feat for sixty-three years: he fasted for the entire week, so much so that some thought that he had transcended human nature. He worked night and day, and whatever he earned from his

labor he gave to the poor. He never accepted anything from anyone. To those who gave to him, he would say: "I have no need to accept anything, for my handiwork sustains me, as do those who come to me for God's sake."

14. A certain disciple said, concerning his Abba, that for twenty whole years he never lay down on a bed to sleep, but slept sitting on the seat at which he worked. In all of these years, he ate only every two, four, or even five days; and when he ate, he kept one hand stretched out in prayer and ate with the other.

"When I asked him," his disciple said, "why he did this, the Elder answered: 'I bring the judgment of God before my eyes, and I cannot remain at rest.'

"On one occasion," the disciple continued, "the Elder went out into the yard and found me sleeping. He then stood over me and wept, saying in lamentation: 'Where on earth is his mind, that he sleeps thus without a care?'"

15. Another Elder dwelt in a distant desert, and a certain brother who visited him found him in poor health. He therefore washed him and, from the provisions that he was carrying, cooked a small meal, which he gave to the Elder to eat. The Elder then said to him: "In truth, brother, I had forgotten that people had such refreshment as this." The brother also offered him a cup of wine, on seeing which he wept, saying: "I did not expect to drink wine until my death."

16. A certain brother recounted the following: "I knew an Elder who lived on a high mountain and refused to accept anything from anyone. He had a little water and he tended his small vegetable garden, from which he lived for fifty years, without ever leaving the enclosure of his cell.

"This Elder became renowned for the many healings which he continually performed for those who visited him, and thus did he repose in peace, leaving five disciples in that place."

17. An Elder said: "I have seen Elders, in this desert, who have lived here for seventy years and have not eaten anything other than plants and dates."

18. Concerning a great Elder who lived in the Lavra of Abba Peter,

it is said that he remained in his cave for fifty years, neither drinking wine nor eating bread, except for bran, and that three times a week.

* Such a basket was called a "*Zempili*" or "*thalli,*" since it was made from the shoots of palm-trees ["*thallia*"—*Trans.*], with which the Fathers manufactured rush mats, baskets, etc. See endnotes for Hypothesis III, above—*Trans.*

** The "*xestes*" [or Latin, "*sextarius*"—*Trans.*] was a Roman unit of measurement for liquids, roughly 640 grams in capacity [or 567 milliliters, a little more than one pint—*Trans.*].

Hypothesis XVII

Various exploits of the Holy Fathers, which encourage us, in our infirmity, to exercise patience and which, in their hyperbole, teach us humility.

A. From Palladios

1. St. Makarios of Alexandria did not practice just one form of asceticism, but different kinds; that is, if he heard that a certain struggler had performed one kind of asceticism, he was eager not only to succeed in it, but also to surpass that individual. When he learned from someone that the Tabennesiotans* ate uncooked food throughout the Great Fast, he forbade himself to use fire in preparing food for seven years; he would eat only raw vegetables and, if he could find any, moistened legumes.

2. Subsequently, he heard from someone else that a certain Elder ate only one *litra*** of bread; he thus broke up the ration of hard bread that he had, placed the bread in a jar, and decided to eat every day only as much as his hand could extract from it. He used to relate to us, jokingly: "I got hold of quite a few morsels, but I could not remove them all, since the neck of the jar was too narrow. This tax-collector—that is, the weakness of the flesh—does not permit me to forego food completely."

3. After that, for a further three years he imposed this abstinence on himself: he would eat four or five *ungiai**** of bread and drink a corresponding amount of water.

4. This adamantine ascetic resolved to conquer sleep, too. As he later recounted, for twenty whole days and nights he did not enter his cell, but remained in the open air, where he was burned by the extreme heat of the day and frozen by the cold of the night,***** in order to overcome sleep. "If I had not decided early on," he said, "to stand under the roof of my cell, I would have gone out of my mind, because my brain was burning. As much as I could, then," he continued, "I overcame sleep. I submitted to it only as much as was absolutely indispensable for the needs of nature; and in order to satisfy these needs, I allowed myself to

sleep a little."

5. On one occasion, this Saint was sitting in his cell and a mosquito stung him on the foot. In pain, he killed the mosquito with his hand, after it had drunk its fill of blood. Afterwards, when he had repented for taking vengeance on the mosquito that had injured him with its sting, he imposed the following penance on himself: he went into the inner desert, where the marshes of Sketis were located; there, in the stagnant waters, the mosquitoes were the size of wasps and could puncture even the hides of wild boars with their stings. He stayed in that place, naked, for a period of six months, and the mosquitoes devoured his flesh to such an extent that lumps, like thick calluses, broke out over his entire body. When he returned to his cell, he had become so disfigured that even those who knew him did not recognize him. They recognized him as St. Makarios the Great, not from his face, but from his voice. Others who saw him, but were unaware of what had happened, thought that he had suffered an attack of elephantiasis.***** Such was the great endurance displayed by this athlete of Christ.

6. When the same Makarios was informed that the Tabennesiotans were very strict in their way of life, he changed his clothing and donned the garb of a layman, walked for fifteen days, and went up to the Thebaid. On reaching the monastery of the Tabennesiotans, he asked them to notify Archimandrite Pachomios, a man endowed with the gift of prophecy, of his arrival; by Divine Providence, though, the Spirit did not reveal Makarios' circumstances to him.

When they had invited him into the monastery and he met Pachomios, Makarios said to him: "I beseech you, my lord, to accept me into your monastery, so that I may become a monk." "You are already an old man," St. Pachomios the Great replied to him. "How will you be able to cope with the ascetic life? There are brothers here who have devoted themselves to this discipline from their youth, having been brought up with hard work, and who can endure the rigors of asceticism. At your age, however, you will not be able to withstand such labors and exertions; rather, you will give up hope and return to the world, where you will speak ill of us and cause very serious harm to yourself."

Thus, Pachomios did not accept him, but dismissed him. Makarios, however, did not leave, but remained for seven days outside the monastery gate without eating. On learning of this, Pachomios called him inside again and repeated what he had told him previously. Makar-

ios then said to him: "Please accept me, Abba, and if I do not fast as the brothers do and do not work as they do, then order them to throw me out of the monastery." After this, Pachomios accepted him and enrolled him in the monastery brotherhood (that monastery has 1,400 monks to this day). After a short time had elapsed, the Great Fast began.

The Elder saw that the brothers gave themselves over to various kinds of ascesis: one would eat in the evening, as was customary, another every two days, and another every five days, while another would keep vigil, standing up the entire night, and occupy himself with work during the day. Each one, in short, would apply himself to a different sort of ascesis, in proportion to his eagerness and ability. So, Makarios, after moistening a sufficient number of palm shoots, stood in a corner of the monastery and, until Lent had passed and Pascha arrived, ate no bread at all, did not drink water, did not bend his knees, did not lie down, and did not eat anything other than a few raw cabbage leaves every Sunday (and he did this, in my opinion, so as to give the impression that he was eating and to avoid falling into pride). He did not talk to anyone, insignificant or important, but stood in silence, attending to himself and conversing constantly with God in his heart, through prayer, while he plaited the palm shoots with his hands.

When the brothers saw this extreme endurance, they went to Pachomios and told him: "Abba, whence did you bring us this incorporeal man, to be a living condemnation of us with his asceticism? Either expel him from here or be assured that we will take leave of you today." When St. Pachomios the Great had learned about the man and his superhuman feats, he prayed to God that He would disclose to him the identity of this man, who displayed such endurance. God revealed to him that it was Makarios the monk.

Pachomios immediately went up to him, took him by the hand, and led him into the Chapel. There, after embracing him, he said to him: "Come now, venerable Father, you are Makarios. Why did you conceal this from me? For many years, ever since I heard about you, I have been wanting to make your acquaintance. I owe you a debt of gratitude for humbling my spiritual children, lest they become prideful about their asceticism. Go now to your own place, I beg you, because you have contributed enough to our spiritual edification, and please pray for us." Then, after the brothers had honored him fittingly, he departed and went back to his cell.

7. This heavenly man related the following to me: "Once, I decided

not to take my mind off of God for five days and not to think about anything material, but to keep my thoughts focused on Him and to have the eyes of my soul trained on otherworldly concepts. After I had finally resolved to do this, I completely closed off my cell and my front yard from the outside world, so that I could not respond to anyone who might come, and I commenced my undertaking on a Monday. I exhorted my mind, saying: 'Be sure not to descend at all from Heaven; there you have Angels, Archangels, all of the Heavenly Hosts, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and, finally, God, the Creator of all; spend your time there, do not descend beneath Heaven, and do not fall into materialistic thoughts.'

"So, after abiding in these thoughts for two days," he went on to say, "I aggravated the Devil so much that he turned himself into a fiery flame and totally consumed everything in my cell—even the rush mat on which I was standing. Thinking that I might even be burned up myself, I grew afraid; for this reason, on the third day, I departed from that otherworldly contemplation and descended to contemplating this world; and I began to think about material things. Thus, I was not given any opportunity to become conceited about this matter."

B. From the Same Author

There is a mountain in Egypt which leads to Sketis and which is called Pherme. About five hundred ascetics live on this mountain; among them there was once one by the name of Paul, an excellent monk who, throughout his ascetic life, observed this practice: He never undertook any work, did not engage in retailing handiwork, and accepted nothing from anyone, except for his daily sustenance. He occupied himself constantly in unceasing prayer. He had made it his rule to say three hundred prayers every day. After collecting an equal number of pebbles, he would place them in his lap and count the prayers with them; when he finished one prayer, that is, he would throw one pebble onto the ground.

He once paid a visit to St. Makarios the Great, who was surnamed "*Politikos*" [the "citizen" or "patrician," either indicating that he was from the city (Alexandria), as opposed to St. Makarios the Egyptian, his elder contemporary, or a reference to his gentility—*Trans.*]," and said to him: "Abba Makarios, I am in great distress." The servant of God Makarios then pressed him to tell him the cause of his sorrow. He replied: "In a certain village there dwells a virgin, who has been practicing asceticism for

thirty years now. I have been told of her, that, with the exception of Saturdays and Sundays, she does not eat at all. She eats every five days and says seven hundred prayers every day. When I heard this, I despaired, because although, as a man, I surpass her in bodily strength, yet I cannot say more than three hundred prayers."

On hearing this, St. Makarios replied to him: "For sixty years, now, I have made it my rule to say a hundred prayers and to work with my hands in order to provide my sustenance. I maintain regular contact with the brothers, and my conscience does not condemn me for having ever neglected anything. So if, in spite of saying three hundred prayers, you are condemned by your conscience, it is obvious that your prayer is not pure and that, although you are capable of praying more, you do not do so."

C. From the Same Author

A certain ascetic of Thebes,• Dorotheos, lived in the boondocks, five *semeia*•• out of Alexandria. I was entrusted to him by St. Isidore, the Presbyter and guest master of the Church of Alexandria; for, I had come to the latter, originally, when I was young, and begged him to instruct me in the monastic life. The holy Isidore took me out of the city and led me to Dorotheos the ascetic; he handed me over to him and asked him to teach me the duties of a monk.

The Elder Dorotheos lived in great hardship; the whole day long, and even in the very heat of noonday, he would gather rocks in the desert, near the sea, and build cells, which he presented to those who, out of infirmity, were unable to construct their own. I once asked him, "Father, what are you doing? At your age, you are killing your body in this severe heat?" He replied to me: "This [my body—*Trans.*] is killing me? I will kill it, too."

Every day, he would eat six *ungiai* of bread, and sometimes a few wild greens, and drink about a cup [*kotyle—Trans.*•••] of water. As God is my witness, I never noticed him stretching out his feet or falling onto a rush-mat or a bed with the intention of sleeping; he would sit up the whole night and weave baskets out of palm shoots, in order to provide his food. Supposing that he was displaying such asceticism now, because I was present, I learned from those who had known him very well from the beginning, since they had at one time been disciples of his, that he had practiced such asceticism even from his youth: he never slept in a normal way, but only inclining his head a little and closing his eyes

slightly while working or eating, such that the bread often fell from his mouth as he chewed it, on account of his dire need for sleep.

I once implored him to stretch out a little on a rush-mat. He then said to me in sorrow: "If you ever persuade the Angels to sleep, you will hereby also persuade him who burns with zeal to imitate them." On another occasion, he sent me at the ninth hour (the third hour of the afternoon) to fetch water from the well for us to drink; I saw an asp in the well. I ran back to him in fear and told him: "Abba, we are going to die, for I saw an asp in the well." When he heard this, he smiled a little, looked at me for some time, and then, quietly shaking his head, said to me: "If the Devil decides to throw asps, snakes, tortoises, or other venomous reptiles into all of the wells, will you stop drinking water?" He went out of his cell, and when he had reached the well, he filled a bucket on his own with water from the well, made the sign of the Cross over the water, and was himself the first to drink it. "Wherever the sign of the Cross is made," he told me, "the evil of Satan is powerless."

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Daniel told the following story about Abba Arsenios: "He once summoned my spiritual Fathers, Abba Alexander and Abba Zoïlos and, humbling himself, said to them: 'Since the demons make war on me and I do not know whether they seize me during my sleep, I beseech you to struggle together with me tonight and observe whether I become drowsy while I keep vigil.'

"So, starting in the evening, one of them sat on his right and the other on his left, without saying anything. The two Abbas subsequently related what happened: 'We went to sleep and woke up, but we did not notice him becoming at all sleepy. In the morning, we only saw him breathe deeply three times, and at once he arose and said: "Yes, I certainly felt sleepy." We replied that we were unaware.'"

2. The same Elder related concerning Abba Arsenios that he always stayed awake the entire night and when, in the morning, he was compelled by the necessity of nature to sleep a little while sitting, he would say to sleep: "Come here, you wicked servant." He would then sleep for a little while and immediately awaken.

3. Abba Arsenios used to say that it is sufficient for a monk, if he is a struggler, to sleep for one hour.

4. Abba Bessarion said: "I remained standing for forty days and nights amid thorn-bushes, without sleeping, in order to overcome sleep."

5. The same Abba Bessarion said: "For forty years I have not lain on my side, but have slept sitting down or standing up." This Elder passed his life like a bird of the air, without disturbance or anxiety; he acquired nothing on this earth, not even the slightest thing, neither books nor clothing, except for a single torn garment. He never went beneath a roof, but always abode in the open air, in desolate and uninhabited places, where he struggled against the cold and the heat. In this way, he succeeded in transcending the needs of the body.

It so happened that he once went into an inhabited region, and, coming upon a certain monastery [*asketerion—Trans.*], sat outside the door and wept, as if he were the survivor of a shipwreck. When asked why he was weeping, he said: "I am weeping for the wealth that I have lost and for the former glory and nobility from which I have miserably fallen." When he was invited to go inside the monastery and to eat with the monks, but could not be persuaded, they offered him bread, saying to him: "Take this bread for now, and whatever you have lost God can restore to you again." As he took the bread, he sighed deeply and said: "I do not know if I will be able to find what I lost; but I will not cease from seeking after it with all of my strength." Thus did he finish his course.

* See endnotes for Hypothesis I, above—*Trans.*

** The Roman "*litra*" was roughly equivalent to 320 grams [See endnote for Hypothesis II, above—*Trans.*]. Each *litra* was divided into twelve "*ungiai.*"

*** The "*ungia*" was a measurement of weight and was roughly equivalent to 27 grams.

**** See endnotes for Hypothesis XLV, Book I—*Trans.*

***** Elephantiasis is a skin disease, similar to leprosy, as a result of which the skin swells up and becomes thick and wrinkled, like the hide of an elephant.

• See endnotes for Hypothesis I, "Thebaid," above—*Trans.*

•• See endnotes for Hypothesis XX, Book I—*Trans.*

••• The Greek "*kotyle,*" as a measurement of liquid weight, was roughly equivalent to the Roman *ungia.*

Hypothesis XVIII

How we should care for the body and what constitutes proper asceticism and restraint.

A. From the Life of St. Anthony

1. St. Anthony the Great, when he thought about eating or sleeping, as well as the other bodily necessities, experienced an uneasiness, for his thoughts were centered on the spiritual nature of the soul. So it was that many times, when he happened to be eating with a group of other monks, he would, at bringing to mind spiritual food, take his leave and distance himself from them, thinking that he might be embarrassed if they were to see him eating.

Of course, in private he ate what his body demanded; though he also often ate with the brothers. And while he was made uneasy thereby, he nonetheless unconstrainedly addressed to them words of spiritual benefit. Among other things, he told them that "one must give all of his care to the soul, rather than the body. Let us set aside a little time for the body, so as to satisfy its natural needs, but dedicate the bulk of our time to the soul and to seeking what is beneficial to it, so that we will not be distracted by the enjoyments of the body and so that the soul might use the body as its servant. For this is the meaning of the words of the Savior: 'Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink?... (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ...But seek first the kingdom of God...; and all of these things shall be added unto you' (St. Matthew 6:31-33). "

2. St. Evthymios the Great said that perfect restraint is that which keeps a man from reaching satiation, even if we feel the need to eat and there is still food before us. This means that we should eat less than that which we feel we need.

B. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said that not every act of asceticism is gen-

uine; for there is asceticism which the Enemy of our souls intensifies, as indeed his disciples also do. How, then, do we distinguish Divine and kingly asceticism from that which is tyrannical and diabolical? Assuredly, by its measure. Let the standard of your fasting be for all times; do not simply fast for three or four days and then destroy the power of fasting by eating a great deal on other days. Do not use all of your weapons at once, so as not to chance finding yourself naked in battle and easily captured by the Enemy. Our weapons are the body and our soul the soldier; one must attend to both in meeting his needs.

When you are young and healthy, fast, for old age and illness will come. To the extent that you can, put away staples that you can use when you are unable to find them. Fast with discretion and exactness; take care, lest the Enemy of your soul should enter in secretly by way of your spiritual work of fasting. Become a skilled money changer, as the Lord says (St. Matthew 25:27), and become well acquainted with the image of the king. For there are forged coins. And while the *substance* of the gold in various gold coins is the same, they differ one from the other (in value) by virtue of the image engraved on them. Now fasting, restraint, and almsgiving are the gold. But the children of the Greeks (philosophers and idolaters) also engrave their seals on gold coins, and the heretics also take pride in such things. However, you should avoid these coins as forgeries and continually watch that you are not harmed by this and do not, without giving sufficient thought, become involved in their work.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Joseph asked Abba Poimen how one should fast, and the latter replied: "I prefer a monk to eat daily, but to eat a little, so that he does not feel satiated."

Abba Joseph asked him further: "Abba, when you were young, did you not eat one day and then fast for two days?"

"In fact," the Elder answered, "I even fasted for three and four days, if not a whole week. But all of these things the Fathers found to be severe, coming to the conclusion that it was better to eat every day, but just a little. They thus bequeathed to us the royal path of moderate fasting; for light burdens are also profitable."

2. The same Abba said that all immoderation is from the demons.

3. There was in the desert a certain hunter of wild animals who saw St. Anthony bantering with the brothers. The Elder, wishing to show this man that we must from time to time show leniency to the brothers, said to him: "Put an arrow on your bow and draw it taut." The hunter did just this, drawing his bow taut. "And draw it further," Abba Anthony told him. The hunter drew it more tightly. Then the Elder told him a third time, "Draw it tighter." "But if I draw it any tighter than it should be," the hunter objected, "the bow will break." Thereupon, the Elder said to him, ending the exchange: "And so it is with the work of God. If I should ask of the brothers austerity beyond good measure, they would shortly lose heart. One must then—when the circumstance demands—show leniency to the brothers."

4. Abba Isaac once visited Abba Poimen; when he saw him washing his feet in a little water—since he was bold before him—he said: "How is it, Elder, that so many are so severely hard on their bodies?"

And Abba Poimen replied to him: "We have not been instructed to put the *body* to death, but to put the *passions* to death."

5. A brother consulted Abba Sarmatas: "My thoughts tell me: 'Do not work, but eat, drink, and sleep.'"

The Elder answered him: "When you are hungry, eat; when you are thirsty, drink water; when you are sleepy, sleep."

The brother departed.

By coincidence, another Elder happened to encounter this brother; so, the brother related to the latter what Abba Sarmatas had told him. Upon hearing this, the Elder said to the brother: "The things that Abba Sarmatas told you have the following meaning: when you are so very hungry and are so thirsty that you cannot stand it anymore, then you should eat and drink. And when you have gone for some time without sleep and are tired, then you should sleep. When, however, you do not feel great need, you should do none of this."

6. An Elder said: "There are some men who eat a lot and are still hungry; there are others who eat little and are satisfied. A man who eats a lot and restrains himself, remaining hungry still, will have a greater reward from God than the man who eats little and is satisfied."

7. Another time, the same Elder said: "If your body is given to illness, in accordance therewith satisfy your needs, so that you do not by

chance become ill and have to be fed by the person looking after you, thus inconveniencing him."

8. Of Abba Netras, the disciple of Abba Silouan, it is said that he sat in his cell, atop Mount Sinai, and lived moderately, without excess, as regards his bodily needs. When he became the Bishop of Pharan,* however, he practiced great austerity in his daily living.

His disciple said to him: "Elder, when we were in the desert, you did not engage in such severe asceticism."

The Elder replied: "There I had the desert, silence, and poverty, and I wanted to look after my body in such a way that I would not become ill and have need for that which I did not have. This, however, is an inhabited place and there are opportunities (for sinful thoughts); and moreover, if I should fall ill here, there are those who will help me, so that I will not have to give up my monastic practices."

9. Abba Megethios the Younger, who lived on Sinai, was visited by one of the Elders, who asked him:

"How are you doing, my brother, in this desert?"

"I fast two days," the former replied, "and on the third day I eat a little bread."

The Elder then told him: "If you care to heed me, eat half that amount of bread, but daily."

The brother did so and found rest.

10. A brother asked an Elder: "To what extent should I fast?"

And the Elder answered him: "Do not attempt to go beyond what is appointed; for many individuals, wishing to fulfill more than what is appointed, have failed at fulfilling even the least."

D. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Fasting is not simply to eat only between long intervals, but to eat sparsely. Asceticism is not for one to eat every two or three days but to avoid eating different kinds of foods. That is, a meal with only one kind of poor food constitutes asceticism. Moreover, fasting is foolish if, though one observes the appointed fasting period, when the time for meals comes around he unrestrainedly rushes to the table and focuses his mind on the pleasure of the food found on the table.

E. From Isaiah the Anchorite

When you are living in your hermitage, arrange your life such that you take only enough food to meet your bodily needs and to sustain you in fulfilling your duties, and so that you need not to venture out. If the demons put it into your mind that you should undertake ascetic labors beyond your strength, do not listen to them; for they urge a man on to every thing which he cannot attain, so that he might fall into their hands and they might rejoice at having conquered him.

Therefore, give your body the food which it needs, then get up, even though you may wish to eat more. Do not eat anything for pleasure's sake or on account of your tastes, whether good or bad. If the need arises to drink wine, take only up to three small glasses, and do not break this rule for the sake of friendship. Do not be a glutton, so as not to awaken within you your past sins. Do not drink wine to the point of inebriation, so that you forfeit the joy of God. The ascetic labor of the soul is to abhor the distraction of one's attention by divers things and to deprive the body. To distract your attention with divers things is to make the soul impotent; but its restoration is occasioned by silence and (Divine) knowledge. If, then, brother, you wish to offer repentance before God, avoid too much wine, for much wine arouses the passions and dispels the fear of God from the soul.

F. From Abba Mark

Those living the ascetic life, when they begin their ascetic labors, must be able to bring them to fruition; thus, both those young and old who have a strong body, and do not fear hardship, should eagerly undertake the most useful and advantageous kind of fasting. They should carefully weigh how much bread they eat and should drink moderate amounts of water at sparse intervals, so that they may depart from their meals without having completely consumed all of their food and water, not having been impeded by the pleasure of the stomach in carrying out their duties to God. If we desire to take our fill of food, soon we will be lax in our attentiveness and will turn to some other desire; and should we also satisfy that desire, then we will abandon it, too, like the first. Indeed, it is impossible to remain satiated when, in order to satisfy ourselves, we fulfill whatever desire we can concoct.

What food is sweeter and more exquisite than *manna*?** Yet, when Israel ate from this and was filled, even though it could want nothing

better, it brought to mind what was inferior: that is, onions and garlic. Within abundance, there dwell new desires. So if, by taking our fill of bread, we want yet other things, let us then not eat it to satiation, lest we still be hungry and need more to eat to be filled. In this way, we will avoid the harm brought on by our desires and will find benefit from the virtue of restraint.

But perhaps some from among such individuals, who are not greatly inclined towards fasting, will say: "Could it be that it is a sin for a man to eat?" But even we do not advise that one refrain from food because it is a sin, but because food sometimes accompanies sin. And Israel did not sin by desiring food, but showed impiety by virtue of complaining against God (Psalm 77:17-21). That is, the Jews said: "Cannot God furnish a table in the wilderness?" [Psalm 77:19]. And having prepared a table for them, the wrath of God was then raised up against them and their mighty were slain, so that they should not again seek and desire other food and blaspheme against the Most High, in this way bringing destruction upon their offspring (Numbers 11:1-35). It is difficult for one to bridle a voracious belly, for it becomes a god to those who are conquered by it—and one who cannot bear with it cannot be saved.

Danger lies, however, not only in satiation, but also in *exhaustion.* When we spend too many days completely without food, then exhaustion and depression will have occasion to rise up and war against us. And our nightly vigils, as well, will occasion sleep, while our daytime prayer will lead us into lustful thoughts, with the result that our sleep will be of no benefit at all, and we will be very greatly harmed by these lustful thoughts. For we will begin to take pride that we have subjected ourselves to greater asceticism than others and to disdain the lesser, which is the greatest of all other errors. That is, just as a farmer, though he may spend a great deal of money to cultivate his fields, will, if he does not plant seeds in them, come to ruin, so it is with us; if we subdue our flesh attentively, but do not capture within our souls the blessing of prayer, so that we pray unceasingly, we well may work against ourselves.

Now, however, someone may say: "Where there is prayer or, in general, virtue, is there a need for fasting?" Of course—the greatest need. That is to say, precisely as a poor farmer, if he seeds a fallow field without first cultivating it, will reap thistle instead of wheat at harvest time, so it is with us; if we do not exhaust our flesh with fasting, we cannot bring to fruition the words of prayer in our hearts, wherefore we will harvest sin instead of virtue. For this flesh comes from that earth. If we

do not then show to the flesh the same care that we show to the earth, the fruit of virtue will never germinate.

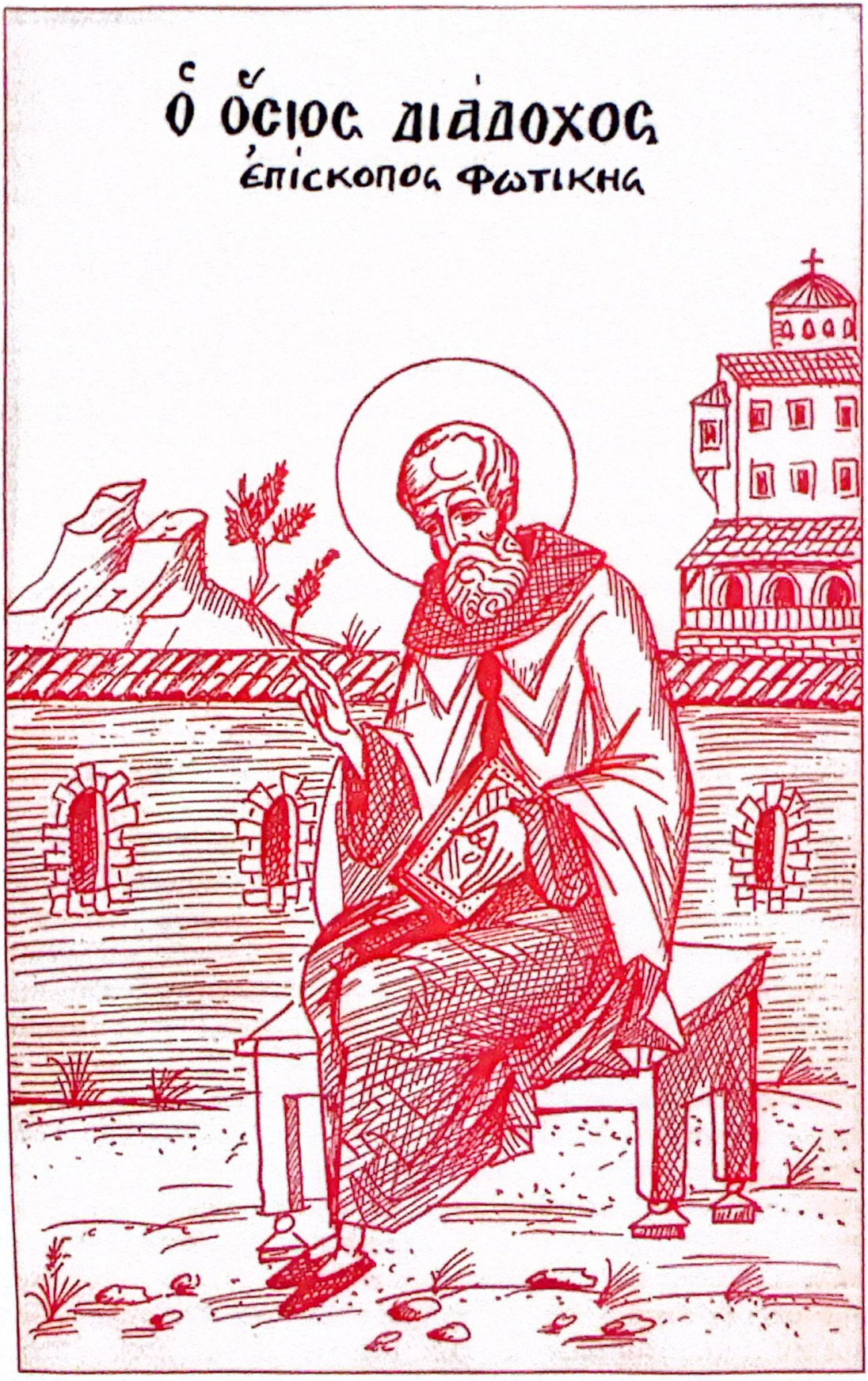
We say all of this, not to impede those who may benefit from fasting, but to counsel those who do not wish to come to harm. For just as he who undertakes fasting with foresight derives benefit, so, on the contrary, one who is not prudent in its application comes to ruin. Thus, those who are interested in being benefited would do well to protect themselves against such harm; that is, the vainglory which it can create. The bread which we eat in the course of fasting, which we apportion for ourselves, let us distribute throughout our fast days, so that we eat a little daily. In this way, we will bind our fleshly mind and have our hearts fixed on prayer, which will better aid to safeguard us, by the power of God, from boasting and to pass all of our days in humility, without which no one can please God.

G. From St. Diadochos

Just as variety in foods burdens the body and makes the mind timorous and slow, by the same token, contrarily, when one is enfeebled by too much restraint, the contemplative part of the soul becomes surly and loquacious. One must, then, in keeping with the condition of the body, regulate one's food so as to suffer privation while fasting, when possible, and at times, when one is ill, to strengthen himself by a relaxation of his fast. For a struggler should not lose bodily strength when fasting, but should have the strength necessary to struggle, such that the soul is also cleansed by the strengthening and combative effort of the body.

Fasting is praiseworthy in itself, but not before God; for it is like an implement which directs those who so wish to prudence. Strugglers after piety, thus, should not become proud from fasting, but should simply await, with faith in God, the fulfillment of our goal. Indeed, not even craftsmen, who know a certain art, are quick to show pride over their tools, alone, in producing their art; but each one expects the kind of work that he does to demonstrate his ability in his art.

Just as soil, when it is regularly watered, makes the seeds which fall upon it to burst forth with a great yield, yet, when it is flooded by too much rain, produces thorns and thistles, such is the soil of the heart. If we take wine in measure, then the heart yields its natural seeds in a pure way and those which are sown therein by the Holy Spirit it makes to blossom most beautifully and to bring forth many fruits; if, however,



St. Diadochos, Bishop of Photike

these seeds are washed away by great amounts of drink, all of the thoughts which are formed in it will truly be thorns and thistles.

When our minds are flooded by the wave of much drink, then they not only passionately turn to those idols which the demons form in our minds during sleep, but the same also create, moreover, various beautiful images from these dream fantasies, and the mind puts them to use like lovers with burning passion; for, the sexual organs having been excited by the warmth that wine promotes, there of necessity arise passionate spectres which occasion pleasure.

One must, therefore, use wine in moderation, so as to avoid harm from its improper use. For when the mind is not seized by pleasure, which leads it to embrace evil, then it is free from demonic fantasy and fleshly desires.

H. From Abba Cassian

The Fathers have not handed down to us only one rule of fasting, or a specific diet, or permission for everyone to eat freely, since all do not have the same strength, whether because of age or illness or because they have not yet subjected their bodies to a firm regimen. To all, however, the Fathers have appointed one goal: to avoid too much food and not to let our stomachs reach satiation. On the basis of vast experience, they ascertained that daily temperance in eating, that is, a little fasting, is far more beneficial than extensive fasting that lasts three or four days or for the period of an entire week. For, as they say, he who undertakes fasting without moderation often also partakes of food without moderation.

Thus, sometimes, from excessive starvation, one weakens the body and becomes lazy in spiritual works; yet another time, he burdens himself from great quantities of food, inviting sloth and indolence. From their vast experience, the Fathers have also determined that vegetarian foods are not appointed to everyone—that is, not to the healthy but to the weak [in faith—*Trans.*] (Romans 14:2); nor are legumes for everyone; nor can everyone use dried bread for sustenance (only the healthy, but not the ill). The Fathers note that one person can eat two pounds of bread and still be hungry, while another person may be sated by one pound and six ounces of bread. To everyone, as we have observed, one rule of self-restraint applies: not to be beguiled by the desire to fill our stomachs or to be led astray by the pleasure of the gullet; for, not only does the qualitative difference in foods ignite the fiery darts of im-

morality, but often the quantity of food, too.

When the belly is full from any food whatsoever, the seeds of debauchery are generated. And furthermore, not only does the immoderate drinking of wine bring inebriation to the mind, but much water and excessive eating lull the mind into sleep and cause it to feel drowsy. The Sodomites*** were not destroyed by the dizziness of too much wine or a variety of foods, as the Prophet says, but by the "fulness of bread" (Ezekiel 16:49).

Illness of body does not come into conflict with purity of heart, when we are careful to give our bodies whatever illness demands and not that which pleasure desires. We should eat food in moderation, in the amount that is required to live, and not become slaves to the assaults of evil desires. The moderate and logical use of food insures the health of the body; it does not detract from holiness. This is the rule of self-restraint which the Fathers have handed down to us: while eating, that one should stop while he is still hungry, without persisting until he is completely satiated. Indeed, the Apostle Paul, when he said, "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14), did not mean to impede the necessary governance of our lives, but forbade sensual attention thereto.

I. From the *Gerontikon*

1. There was once held an oblation (Feast)**** on Abba Anthony's mountain. Now, a small container of wine was left there. So, one of the Elders took it, put it in a glass, and offered it to Abba Sisoes. He drank it. He was also given a second glass, and drank it. When he was offered a third glass, however, he did not take it, but said: "Stop, brother. Or are you not aware of the existence of Satan?"

2. A confused life derives from an unruly life; moderation and propriety in one's life enlighten the mind and cast out confusion. A confused mind, which is born of disorder, brings confusion to the soul, on account of which purity slowly disappears and there comes about, thereafter, turmoil. Whereas order arises out of peace and from peace light is born in the soul, and from the light of peace a pure wind blows through the mind. To the extent that the heart can draw near to wisdom, it receives Grace from God.

If you wish, then, to approach God with your heart, demonstrate this desire to Him in bodily things; that is, in the control of needs, by the

moderate consumption of one kind of food, and with similar bodily asceticism and hardships undertaken with discretion and moderation. It is on this that the Lord established the foundation of perfection, since He began His work by suffering in the desert.***** It is thus, then, that you should also rise up to greater and more perfect things and approach God noetically, with the help of Divine Grace.

3. A humble and undisturbed way of life, which abides in stability, is a great power; for it can open up a cave in a hard rock. Do not think, brother, that outside thoughts are blocked in any other way, save by making our bodies accustomed to a defined order.

* This Pharan [also known by its Latin name, "Pharanitanus"] was a city on the Red Sea, an episcopal See so densely populated by anchorites that almost nowhere else can one find more remnants of monasteries and sketes than there and on the rocky cliffs of the neighboring Mount Serbas. The Synod of Chalcedon appointed a Bishop from among the monks, who answered to the Bishop of Jerusalem. After the sixth century, the monks and citizens of the city fell to Monophysitism. The desert between Palestine and Egypt, through which the Israelites were guided by Moses, is also called the Pharan. It was in this Pharan desert that St. Chariton lived the ascetic life, where he built a most pure monastery (276 A.D.), in which a great number of monks struggled. Later, St. Evthymios the Great, in his younger years, lived as an ascetic near this monastery.

** "*Manna*", or "*man*" [vide infra—*Trans.*], is the food which God sent to the Jews during their wanderings in the desert of Sinai. As Scripture relates, manna would appear every morning, in the form of small white spores or crystallized droplets of dew; the Jews were obliged to collect this before the rising of the sun, since afterwards it was dissolved by the heat. And the Jews were commanded to collect the manna every morning in the amount of one *omer*, that is, 1,750 grams, per person, and to discard whatever was left over each evening, for it would otherwise breed worms and become fetid. Only the manna which was gathered on Friday and Saturday would last two days. The Jews survived on manna for forty years, and its taste, according to Scripture, resembled that of honey wafers.

[When the Jews saw *manna* falling from Heaven, they exclaimed, "*Man hu*," or "What is this," as it is translated in the *Septuaginta*. Some scholars argue that their exclamation should be rendered, "Is it *man*?" "*Man*," or "*mannus*," was an edible substance—resembling the description of Biblical *manna*—found in Egypt at the time. Thus the Israelites may, indeed, have simply been asking whether what was falling from the heavens was that familiar substance.

Aside from speculating that the Old Testamental *manna* from Heaven may have, in fact, been the *mannus* known to the ancient Egyptians, Biblical critics have also tried to argue that various similar substances naturally found in the desert could have been the actual source of the supposedly miraculous *manna* that sustained the Jews in their wandering. However, according to the clear witness of the Old Testament, this food fell from the heavens, did not fall on the Sabbath, and sustained the Israelites for a full forty years, in every season of the year. Unless one simply discards that witness, these reports argue against *manna* having been of anything but supernatural provenance—*Editors.*]

*** The Sodomites were the inhabitants of Sodom, of the city which God destroyed because of the sins of those dwelling in it, sending down Divine fire from the Heavens. Such was the dissoluteness of the Sodomites, that "Sodomite" came to mean someone perverted by every kind of shameful sexual act.

**** Here, the word "oblation" [*prosphora—Trans.*], has the same meaning as the word "feast." On Great Feasts, or on the day which the central Church of the skete (the *Katholikon*) observed as its Feast Day, the hermit Fathers living in the area would gather to celebrate, in common, the Feast in question. On these Feast Days, laymen would also come from faraway areas, bringing with them the holy gifts appointed for the Divine Liturgy and various foodstuffs and other staples that they would leave with the monks. Besides the holy gifts that were offered on Great Feasts, and other staples, these gatherings were also called *prosphora*, just as the loaves that are appointed for the Divine Liturgy are called *prosphorai* or *prosphora* [singular, *prosphora* and *prosphoro(n)*, respectively—*Trans.*].

***** After His Baptism in the River Jordan by St. John the Forerunner, and before beginning His preaching, our Lord Jesus went into the desert, where He fasted for forty days and nights and went hungry. There, by Divine Providence, He was tempted by the Devil, who, nevertheless, did not succeed therein. Thereafter, Satan was obliged to leave Jesus in peace, and the Angels of God came "and ministered unto Him" (St. Matthew 4:1-11).

Hypothesis XIX

How one who loves God should celebrate Feasts and what the food of the Fathers should be on Feasts.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "Should your thoughts tell you to prepare various foods for a Feast, do not listen to them, for you will celebrate in the manner of the Jews. Only the Jews prepare thusly for Feasts. Contrition and tears are the food of choice for the monk."

2. It is said of Abba Helladios that he always ate bread and salt, as did the other monks in the skete. Now, when Pascha arrived, he would say to himself: "Since I eat seated on the other days, now that it is Pascha, I shall put forth a little effort and eat standing up." And this he always did on Pascha.

3. One of the Fathers said: "I know a brother who remained in his cell and fasted the entire Paschal week. When the brothers gathered in the evening, he fled, so as not to eat (at the common table) in the Church. He boiled a few beets and ate them without bread."

4. An Elder said, "Let us rejoice in the words of God and let us celebrate with the sayings of the Holy Fathers, and not with the fullness of our bellies, but spiritually."

5. Abba Paul of Cappadocia, related the following: "When our region was ravaged by the Persians,* we, too, fled from our monastery and were scattered. When I then reached Constantinople, by coincidence I found a ship which happened to be going to Alexandria. Having paid my passage, I boarded it, and after a few days we arrived in Alexandria. There I met monks from Mount Nitria and went with them. It was thus that I reached the mountain and took up residence with an Elder. After spending a year and three months with him, I went to the Abbot of the monastery and said to him:

"'Be merciful, Abba, and give me a cell, so that I can live in silence

alone. I can no longer live with the Elder, since he follows neither the life of a monk nor that of a layman. For example, he forces me to fast on Sundays and other Feasts, and even during the season of Pentecost. The worst of it is that he will not permit me to chant the canons and *Troparia* which everyone always chants. During the days of Holy Lent, except for Saturday and Sunday, we ate neither bread, nor oil, nor drank wine, but limited ourselves to fruit, eating only every two days.'

"To this, the Abbot of the monastery replied to me: 'Brother, return and stay with the Elder, if you want to be certain of your salvation. For he who desires his salvation must not refrain even on Sunday and on Feast Days from the glorification of God, which is strengthened and maintained by fasting and vigils.

"'Just as a fish cannot live without water, a monk cannot live even for a moment without continual prayer and vigils and without acting in concord with God. To fast two days in a row is appropriate only for anchorites, just as eating fruit, but not bread, is otherwise neither beneficial nor commendable. It smacks of vanity. And to fast for forty days, that is, for the Holy Lent, but to eat everything and to relax one's fasting for fifty days afterward, is appropriate to laymen and not to monks. As well, to sing canons and melodious tones belongs to Priests who Liturgize in the world and to other such people. Indeed, people are used to gathering in Church for this reason.

"'But for monks, who live far from the noises of the world, this is not only not beneficial, but often occasions harm. Just as a fisherman catches a fish with a hook and bait, in the same way the Devil both traps a monk with these *Troparia* and with singing, dragging him down by vanity, the satisfaction of men, and sensuality, and lures him into the cesspool of lasciviousness. Let the monk who wishes to be saved, then, flee far away from singing.'"

B From St. Ephraim

A Feast Day for a monk is the keeping of the commandments of Christ; and his comfort is in not doing evil. Joy for the monk is his departure from this world and his journey to the Lord. His boast, finally, is fear of the Lord.

* In all probability "ravaged by the Persians" refers, here, to the destruction which befell Syria and Mesopotamia, provinces of the Byzantine State, during the first Persian War (530-532 A.D.), when the Persians invaded these provinces and wreaked great destruction.

Hypothesis XX

That secret eating is a great evil, and that it by itself can lead a monastic to ruin.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

A nun from the convent of which Equitius the Great was Abbot went to the garden and, seeing a head of lettuce, desired it. And without even making the sign of the Cross, she voraciously ate it. Immediately, an unclean spirit entered into her and cast her to the ground. Those who were thereabouts, on seeing this occurrence, quickly called for Father Equitius to come to the aid of the endangered nun.

Now, the Father having come immediately to the garden, the devil that was thrashing the nun began to cry out and say in his defense: "What did I do? I was just sitting on top of the lettuce when she came and bit into me."

The man of God then angrily ordered the spirit to leave the nun and never again to enter into her.

Straightway this unclean spirit left her and never again dared to come near her.

B. From the Same Author

Also, Athanasius, who was a Priest in our monastery, told us the following: At Iconium*—whence he had also come—there was a monastery, that of "Galata," as it was called. Living in this monastery was a monk who was considered by all to be of the most upright conduct and pure habits. However, as it was demonstrated in the end, he was far from what he appeared to be; for, though he pretended to fast in the presence of the brothers, in fact he ate secretly when he was away from them.

Anyway, it so happened that he fell ill and the end of his life was approaching. Realizing that he would shortly die, he called all of the brothers of the monastery to come to him. They readily gathered, expecting that from such a virtuous man, as they took him to be, they would hear something important, such as some sort of precious counsel, now that

he was dying. He, however, in despair and overcome by fear, said to them:

"You believed that I was fasting along with you, while in fact I was eating secretly. And now I have been given to the dragon to devour me. He has curled his tail around my knees and feet and, placing his head in my mouth, with which I secretly ate, is sucking out my life." As soon as he said this, he immediately died, not being allowed even a moment of life in which to free himself, by repentance, from that dragon.

By this it is made abundantly clear that he saw this vision solely for the benefit of the rest of us, who have heard of it; this monk, that is, made it known that from the Enemy, to which he willingly gave himself over, he could not flee.

* Iconium is an inland city in Asia Minor, about 500 kilometers from Smyrna. Sts. Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel in this city, and a local council convened there in 235 A.D. Before the devastation of Asia Minor, it had around forty thousand inhabitants, of whom two thousand were Greek Orthodox, who also had a Church there.

Hypothesis XXI

That a monk should eat once a day, after the ninth hour, if he wishes to adhere to the exact practice observed by the Fathers, and not only anchorites, but also many among those who lived in cœnobitic monasteries.

A. From the Life of the Holy Confessor Chariton

St. Chariton the Great dwelled in the thieves' cave,* and lived, there, an austere ascetic life. In this way, he drew many near him. Since the faithful ran to him, what was before a river and a wilderness became, on account of the many people, more like a city. The blessed one was saddened, since he saw that this turmoil impeded his beloved silence. Besides, he wanted to avoid the glory of men (knowing that it can bring great confusion to the world of the soul). Before leaving, he called his disciples to him and instructed them in all things that were appropriate to the monastic life. He commanded them to fix an appropriate hour for meals—which was towards the end of the day; not to eat a lot, so as to be satiated, but to stop before the stomach was yet satisfied; that their food be only bread, using a little salt to add flavor to their dry diet; for drink, to use water only, taking it in moderation and sparsely; and to consider inactivity the cause of great evils, occupying themselves with their handiwork as they chanted Divine Psalms (Ecclesiasticus 34:26-30).

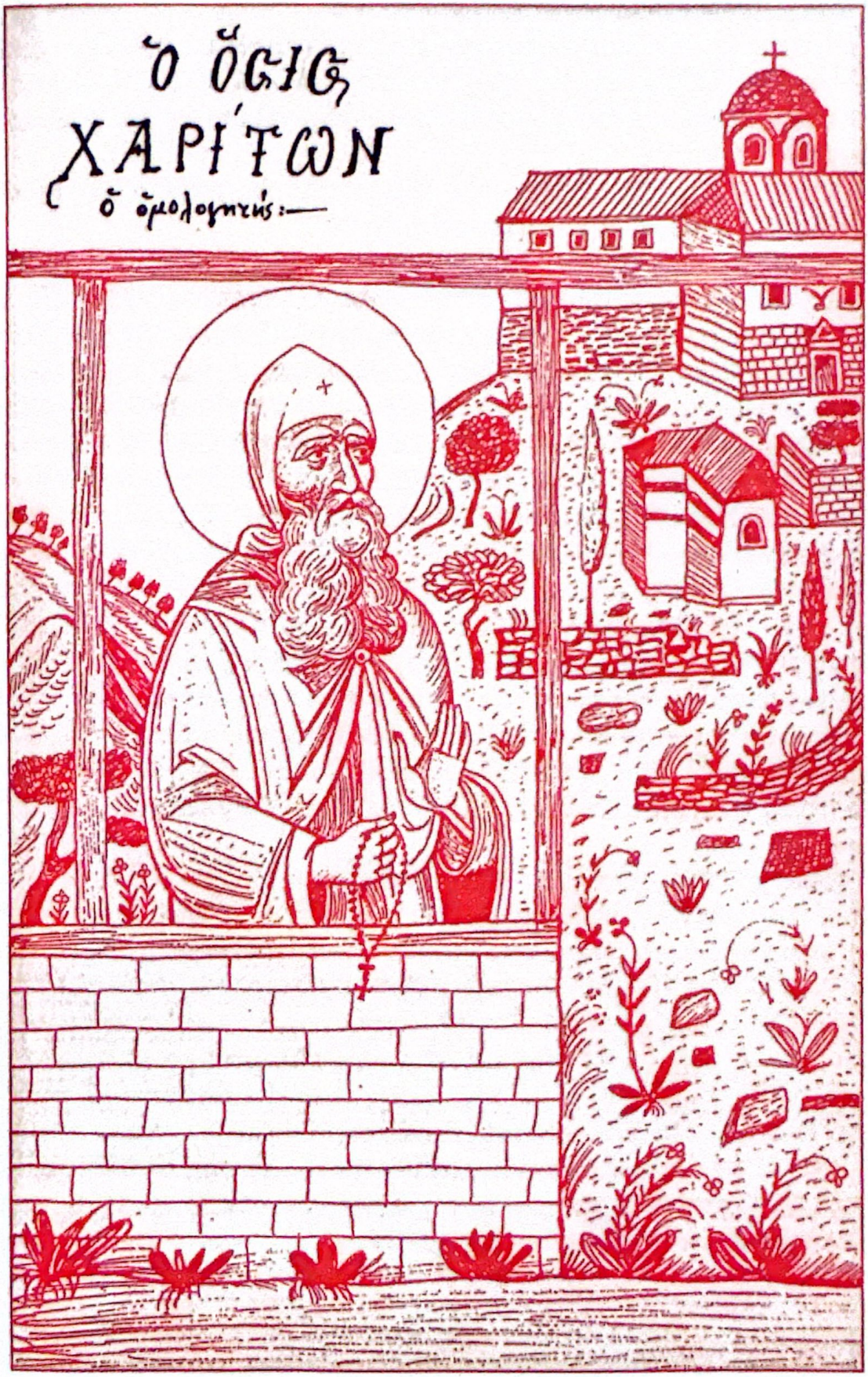
B. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Anthony once visited Abba Ammoun on Mount Nitria. Having exchanged a brotherly kiss on meeting, Abba Ammoun asked:

"Since, by your blessing, the brothers here have multiplied, and a number of them wish to build cells far from here, how far away do you suggest that these cells be built?"

The Abba replied: "Let us eat something around the ninth hour, and afterwards let us go out for a walk in the desert and decide the issue in the desert itself."

So, having walked into the desert to the point that the sun began to



St. Chariton the Confessor

set, Abba Anthony said:

"Let us pray and make the sign of the Cross here, so that any who wish to do so may build cells at this place. Thus, both those who come here to visit them, and those from here who go there to visit, will not be distracted by these visits."

C. From the History of the Monks of Syria

St. Julian the Great lived for a number of years in a natural cave, without once putting his hand to improving it. Therein, he gave himself over to an austerely ascetic life (for nourishment, he had bread made of millet with bran—which he ate with salt—and the sweetest drink: water as nature provided it; and his food and rich delight were his continuous and unbroken noetic communion with God). This way of life drew many to him, who had learned of this philosophy of his; some of these settled next to him, some at a distance. All desired to be near him and to have him as their Teacher. At first, the Saint refused to receive them; later, however, being informed inwardly in his soul, in a mystical way, that these individuals were motivated in their efforts by God, he happily accepted them. In this manner, within a little time the number of those who came to be with him numbered one hundred, and they filled his cave completely. Like this spiritual athlete, they, too, nourished themselves only with bread made from millet, which they seasoned with a little salt.

Their spiritual exercises were these: at night, everyone together would sing the vigil, inside the cave; at dawn, they would go, two-by-two, into the desert, where one would kneel and offer up the worship owed to God the Master, while the other, standing upright, would chant fifteen of the Psalms of David. Afterwards, they would switch places in this spiritual labor, and the one who was kneeling would stand and chant, while the one who was standing would kneel and do prostrations. This work they would undertake continuously from early morning until late in the afternoon. Just before the setting of the sun, they would all gather once more and celebrate Vespers. Then, gathering in the cave, some sitting here and some there, they would eat their frugal meal.

D. From Abba Isaiah

When you undertake the Hesychastic life in your cell, regulate your-

self in the matter of food, so that you eat what is necessary for your body, in order to do your work well and so that you do not desire to go out from your cell. Eat once a day and give your body what is absolutely necessary, rising from the table while you still desire to eat more.

E. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

There was a custom in the monastery of the holy Father Benedict, established by him personally. In accord with it, if the brothers were sent to do some work outside the monastery, they would neither eat nor drink anything until their return to the monastery. This rule was strictly observed by all of the monks.

Now, one day several brothers of the monastery were sent by the Saint to do a task; since they had a great distance to cover, when evening fell they did not have enough time to return. Since it was already getting late, they were obliged to stay in the cell of a chaste nun, where they also ate. On their return, they sent ahead one of the brothers from among them to the Father, in order to ask his blessing, as was the custom, to eat. Seeing that he had arrived during the night, the Saint asked him: "Where did you eat?"

"Nowhere, Father," the monk answered.

"Why do you lie? Did you not stop at the cell of that nun, where you also ate? Did not each of you have such and such a number of drinks?"

The monk, terrified by the clairvoyant power of the Saint, and much rebuked for his transgression, fell at the feet of the Saint and asked forgiveness.

The compassionate Saint forgave him. The rest of the monks arrived at the monastery in the morning. And these the Saint very strongly chastised. Since they, too, confessed and fell to the ground asking forgiveness, he also forgave them. Afterwards, they assured the Saint that they would never again, from that time on, until their last breath, transgress a command given by him.

* This cave was formerly inhabited by certain thieves, who captured the Divine Chariton, being then young, on his way to Jerusalem—where he was going to make a pilgrimage and find an appropriate place for a hermitage—and took him to the cave. However, by the Providence of God, the thieves died from poisoning, a viper having spewed out its venom into the container of wine from which they were drinking, and St. Chariton was left free. Reckoning this, therefore, to be the Will of God, he remained to struggle in the cave. Many others who wished also to lead the monastic life followed him. With what remained of the spoils of the thieves, he built up a most pure lavra,

which, named after the area there, was called the "Pharan Lavra." Those wishing to read a more complete history of this monastery should consult the life of St. Chariton (*The Great* Synaxaristes *of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. IX, p. 636).

Hypothesis XXII

We should not eat for enjoyment, but out of bodily need; he who does not eat for enjoyment, even if the food is enjoyable, suffers no harm.

A. From the Life of St. Savvas

St. Savvas, when he was still young and living in the Monastery of Flavianæ, which was located in Cappadocia (about twenty *stadia** from Moutalaska, the Saint's village), subjected himself to a general life of asceticism and self-restraint; likewise he practiced self-constraint regarding the enjoyment of the gullet—the care and comfort of the stomach.

One day, now, he was working in the monastery garden. The apples hanging from the tree in the garden aroused his appetite and he was tempted to eat before the mealtime. For a moment, then, he was moved by the vision of the apples (and they were indeed beautiful to see), being a man, as he was, and thus subject to human wants. And so moved was he, that he picked an apple. At once, however, he realized that this was an attack from the Evil One and that he (the Evil One) is accustomed to causing temptation with the bait of enjoyment; he recalled, as well, that the serpent hid behind a piece of fruit, through the enjoyment and eating of which the Forefathers were cast out of Paradise and thus fell to so many evils.**

Having thought about all of this at length, he immediately threw the apple to the ground, crushing, along with the apple, also his desire, as it were. Thus this desire which was incited by his eyes was subdued by his feet. And as a penance, he appointed to himself that, as long as he should live, he would not eat an apple or give heed to the desires of his belly.

B. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike so loved fasting, that she had no desire to relax a fast, even for just a short time. She considered it an insurer and foundation of all of the other virtues. Thus, if it so happened that, out of necessity, she ate a bit more than usual, this would have a contrary effect. That is, she would grow pale and lose weight. For when one loathes

that which is forced on him (to eat), then surely there are thwarted at once both the motive of his action and its benefit (that of food) and, depending on one's initial mental disposition, as a natural result, all that follows. Hence, those who eat with joy become fat, while those who eat without appetite and without joy experience the opposite; that is, the latter become thin, their bodies shrivel, and they look pale. Those who are ill give evidence of this truth.

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder living in the Thebaid, Antianos, had dedicated himself from his youth to great and arduous asceticism. In his old age, however, he became ill and went blind. So the brothers took great care of him, on account of his illness, and went to see him every day, since because of his illness and infirmity he could not even lift his food to his mouth. Several of the brothers asked Abba Aïo, who was experienced and well-known, about the Elder.

"Abba," they said to him, "what will be the outcome of this great care that we give the Elder?"

He answered them: "Let me tell you that if, in his heart, he is eager for and accepts this care with thankfulness, and if he eats but one date for the enjoyment of his stomach, then God will disregard his asceticism; however, if he does not wish this attention, but against his will accepts (what is offered to him), God will maintain the reward for his labor wholly intact, since, without so wishing, he is compelled by those who serve him, who also certainly have their reward."

2. Some Fathers asked Abba Megethios: "If there is food left from another day, do you want the brothers to eat it?"

"If it has become spoiled," the Abba replied, "it is not good to oblige the brothers to eat it and become ill; in this case, let it be thrown out. On the other hand, if it is good, but other food has been prepared for the purpose of delighting the gullet, and what is left over is thrown away, this is evil."

3. A certain ascetic Father said: "The eyes of the pig are so placed by nature that it of necessity looks at the ground and can never look up towards Heaven. Precisely so," he continued, "is the soul which is attracted by pleasures; if it but once wallows in the mud of pleasure, it cannot again behold heavenly things."

D. From Abba Isaiah

If gluttony wars against you with the desire for various foods, think of their (eventual) stench and you will find rest.

E. From Abba Mark

He who has enjoyed bodily delights beyond what he should have will later pay in pains a hundredfold the number of these pleasures. He who believes in the good things to come abstains from the delights of this world without greatly questioning this; while he who disbelieves becomes hedonistic and callous. Do not say, "How can a poor man, lacking the means, desire pleasures?" For, one can indulge in pleasures, and even more wickedly, simply through his thoughts.

F. From St. Diadochos

All of the concocted drinks, whose producers call appetizers, since, it seems, they incite the appetite so that the belly will accommodate a lot of food—these should be avoided by those who wish to put under control the members of the body, which are inflamed by such drink. For not only does the drinking of these occasion harm for the bodies of those who engage in spiritual struggles, but their curious mixture does great damage to the souls of those who are God-fearing. Indeed, what is lacking in wine, such that they must mix it with various aromatics to change its natural state?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, our teacher in this Divine regimen, was at His Passion given vinegar to drink by those who carried out their diabolical orders. In my opinion, this happened in order to show us most clearly with what mental disposition we should give ourselves over to such struggles. We strugglers against sin should not—He tells us—wage war while using food and drink which incite pleasure, but rather endure the bitterness of the fight with calm. Let us add hyssop*** to the sponge of insult, in order perfectly to make the form of the cleansing of our souls resemble that of the example (that of the Cross). Bitterness, that is, is a sign of struggle, while purification is surely the end-result of perfection.

G. From St. Maximos

Just as night follows day and winter the summer, so pain and af-

flictions follow on pleasure, whether in this life or the next.

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "The Devil occupies himself constantly with any flaw in a monk; for, as a certain Saint said, a habit which persists for a long period of time acquires natural power, and above all in those who are greatly negligent. So, as long as you are healthy, cease seeking every food which you strongly long for. Eat that which God sends you and be thankful to Him at all times."

2. Several Fathers questioned Abba Makarios the Egyptian. "Why," they said, "is your body always thin, whether you fast or eat?"

He replied: "The wood that supports the pot on a fire is eventually consumed by the flames; likewise, a man, if he succeeds in cleansing his spiritual mind, consumes his body with the fear of God."

3. A brother inquired of Abba Isidore: "Why," he said to him, "do the demons fear you?"

"Because," Abba Isidore replied, "from the moment that I became a monk, I have struggled never to allow wrath to enter my gullet."

It is my view that by "wrath" Abba Isidore meant "pleasure," by reason of which we bring down upon ourselves the wrath of God, thus being subjected to many more labors.

4. The same Elder said: "Forty years have passed since I first understood the sins of my mind, and I have since succumbed neither to my desires nor to anger."

5. Grapes were once offered to Abba Makarios, and he had the desire to eat them. Restrained by his sense of self-control, however, he sent them to an ill brother who wanted some grapes to eat. On receiving them, the brother experienced great joy. But since he, too, did not wish to satisfy his desire, he sent them to another brother, under the pretext that he did not have an appetite for food. This he did to hide his effort at self-restraint. But that brother, too, did the same thing; though he wanted to eat some grapes, he did not do so, but sent them to yet another brother. And that one sent them on, in turn, to another.

In this manner, the grapes passed through the hands of a number of brothers, without anyone tasting them. In the end, they made their way

back to Abba Makarios, since the last brother to receive them, not knowing that they had initially come from him, sent them to the Abba as a great gift. The Elder, recognizing the grapes and having examined the matter, came to realize what had happened. He was thereby astonished and thanked God for the great self-restraint of the brothers.

6. Abba Pior, when he had occasion to eat, would take a walk; and in this manner, walking, he took his food. When someone asked him why he did this, he answered that he did not wish to make of his food work, but a hobby. And to another person who asked him about this same thing, he gave the following answer: "In order that my heart not feel pleasure when I eat food, I try not to disturb it; and I distract it with walking, so that its spiritual faculty is not fixed on food."

7. "In what way should I live?" a brother asked Abba Sisoes.

"The Prophet Daniel," the Elder replied, "said: 'I ate no pleasant bread' (Daniel 10:3)."

8. It is said of a certain Elder that he once wanted to eat a small fig. Having picked it, he took no steps to eat it; he hung it up in front of him, so that he could look at it, and thus taught himself self-control, having at first been lured by his desire.

* The *"stadion"* was a measure of distance in ancient times, equal to about 100 *orguiai* [Latin, *"orguiae"—Trans.*] (fathoms), or approximately 181 of today's meters.

** When God created Adam and Eve, he placed them in Paradise, thereupon giving them a command that they should not eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they were to eat from these fruits, they would die. The serpent, however, deceived the woman, telling her that if they were to eat from the fruit of this tree, they would become like gods, and Eve, succumbing, ate of the fruit and gave it to Adam, who also ate of it. Thus, their eyes were opened and they came to know good and evil, and seeing their nakedness, they wrapped themselves in fig leaves... (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7). For their disobedience, God cast them out of Paradise. It is said that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was an apple. [Certain Patristic writings, however, say, more accurately, that the fruit of the tree was a fig—*Trans*]. This is what St. Savvas remembered when he stretched out his hand and picked the apple in the monastery garden.

*** The hyssop reed is an aromatic pharmacological plant, used widely by the Jews and cited here in reference to the Passion of the Lord. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was nailed to the Cross for the redemption of our sins, having seen the whole of the Divine aim of His incarnate presence on the earth being brought to an end, fulfilled the prophecy of the Prophet David, who said, "They gave me also gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 68:22). The Lord said, "I thirst." Then the ungrateful Jews, taking a hyssop reed and tying a sponge to it, dipped it in gall

(vinegar) and "...put it to His mouth" (St. John 19:28-29). See for greater detail the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XIII, p. 516 [Second Edition], as well as p. 601.

Hypothesis XXIII

How and with what purpose a monk should sit in the refectory, how he should approach food, and what he should guard against after the meal.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. One of the Fathers used to say: "For us monastics, there are three things that are extremely important, which we must approach with fear and spiritual joy: Communion of the Holy Mysteries, the gathering of the brothers in the refectory, and the place where they wash."

2. The same Father related this noteworthy incident: "Once upon a time, there was a certain Elder who was venerable and clairvoyant. One day, he sat down to eat with a large group of brothers. While they were eating, the Elder paid close attention to them, and with his spiritual eyes he saw some of them eating honey, others bread, and others dung. This puzzled him, and he besought God, saying: 'O Lord, explain this mystery to me: how is it that the same foods have been placed on the table for all, and yet they appear so different when the brothers are actually eating them?'

"In response to his question, he heard a voice from Heaven, which said to him: 'The brothers who appear to be eating honey are those who sit at the table with fear, trembling, and spiritual joy—who pray unceasingly and whose prayer ascends to God as incense. The brothers who appear to be eating bread are those who, in the act of eating, thank God for what He has given them. Finally, the brothers who appear to be eating dung are those who murmur while they are eating and say: "This is good" or "this is rotten." We should not, therefore, have such thoughts, but should rather glorify God and send up hymns of praise to Him, so that the Apostle's saying might be fulfilled: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).'"

3. A brother asked an Elder: "Suppose I am going somewhere with brothers and they set a meal out for us to eat; and what if the brothers,

either out of abstinence or because they have already eaten, do not wish to eat, but I am hungry. What should I do in such a case?"

The Elder replied to him: "If you are hungry, look to see how many are sitting down; at the same time, count how many servings have been put out. If you find that they have put one out for you, then eat what is yours and it will not be an impediment for you, because you will have eaten what was necessary. But if you are overcome by gluttony and eat more than that, this is a sin."

B. From Abba Isaiah

1. Brother, when you are sitting in the refectory with other brothers and you are younger than they, say to yourself: "Eat properly." Recall your sins, so as not to eat with pleasure, and reach out your hand with restraint, as if they were putting pressure on you to eat. If there is something in front of another, do not reach out your hand towards it. Let your garments cover your feet and keep your knees together. When you are eating, do not look up at your neighbor and do not glance this way and that; and do not utter even a single word, unless it is truly necessary. Do not reach out for something that you want unless you have first said, "Bless." When you are drinking water, do not make a noise in your throat while you swallow it, as people in the world do. When you have finished eating, get up as soon as the other brothers do, and do not sit down to converse with anyone, not even about God; but enter your cell at once and weep over your sins.

2. If you are visiting a brother or a *cœnobion*, do not eat to satiety any tasty food you may find there, but seek to go to your cell straightaway and take care not to betray yourself. When you are sitting with other brothers, if some phlegm gets into your throat, do not expectorate in front of them, but stand up and spit it up outside. Do not stretch when people are looking at you. If you are seized by a desire to yawn, do not open your mouth in front of others, and it will leave you. Do not laugh loudly and with your mouth wide open, for this is a sign of impudence.

If you are eating in refectory and there is one among you who does not want to eat, let him not say, "I cannot eat," but let him compel himself unto death, and God will give him relief. If your brother cooks something and it does not turn out well, do not say to him, "You have cooked badly," for this is death for your soul; just think how aggrieved you would be if you heard this remark from someone, and you will find

spiritual rest.

C. From St. Diadochos

To eat and drink from everything that is set out on the table or offered to us and to give thanks to God does not conflict in any way with the principles of inner knowledge, because all things are good (*cf.* Genesis 1:31); but gladly to abstain from large quantities of pleasant food is the mark of those who are most discerning and have made the greatest progress in inner knowledge. We cannot gladly disdain the pleasant things that lie before us, if we have not consciously and fully tasted the sweetness of God.

D. From Abba Cassian

We have learned that the practice of reading in the *cœnobia* of the East at mealtimes is a tradition deriving from the *Typikon* [the written rule governing the worship services or the daily conduct of activities in a monastic community—*Trans.*] of the Cappadocians, not from that of the Egyptians. The Cappadocians appointed readings, not so much for the sake of spiritual exercise as to prevent those engaged in eating from talking during meals. Among the Egyptians, and especially among those of Tabenne, such a strict silence prevails, when that numerous multitude has assembled at mealtime, as one encounters almost nowhere else. Not even a murmur is heard, except from the Superior, who, if he should need something, signifies it by a light knock rather than by a word. The monks' monastic veils reach down as far as their eyelids, to prevent their eyes from roving aimlessly and observing one another with excessive curiosity, in order that they may attend only to the table and to thanking God Who nourishes them. The Tabennesiotans make very sure that no one takes food outside the refectory.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. The Fathers recount that on one occasion, while the brothers were eating at the *agape* meal,* one brother laughed. When Abba John saw him, he wept and said: "What can this brother have in his heart that he should laugh, when, rather, he ought to weep, since he is eating at an *agape?*"

2. Once upon a time, one of the Elders was ill, and since he was unable to eat food for many days, his disciple begged him to allow him to make him a little custard. The Elder gave him permission. The disciple then ran off, made the custard, and brought it to the Elder to eat. There were two vessels hanging from the ceiling of the cell: one contained honey, the other linseed oil, which by nature gives off a foul stench, is completely inedible, and is used for lighting lamps. Out of inattentiveness, the disciple put linseed oil into the custard instead of honey and brought it, thus prepared, to the Elder. On tasting it, the Elder immediately perceived his disciple's mistake; he did not say anything, however, but ate the custard in silence.

The disciple compelled the Elder to eat more, and he, under pressure, ate a little. When the disciple persisted in begging him to eat a bit more, the Elder said: "In truth, my son, I cannot eat anything else." Then the disciple, presumably in order to encourage the Elder and to stimulate the appetite that he had lost through illness, said to him: "The custard is good, Abba; look, I will eat some with you." But as soon as the disciple put it in his mouth, he realized the mistake that he had made and at once fell at the Elder's feet, saying to him: "Woe is me, Abba, for I have killed you; yet, you put up with this sin of mine, for you made no comment." "Get up, my child" the Elder replied, "and do not be upset; for if God had wanted me to eat honey, you would have put honey in the custard."

3. An Elder said: "When you sit down to eat, vanquish the demon of gluttony by delaying; restrain him and tell him: 'Just hold on, you will not starve.' Eat with decorum, and the more the demon of gluttony urges you on, be certain to eat all the more calmly. For, this is how he puts force on a man and goads him on: namely, by making him to eat everything at once."

F. From St. Ephraim

It is better to eat and give thanks to the Lord than to refrain from eating and to condemn those who eat and give thanks to the Lord. Brother, have you sat down at the table? Eat bread and do not criticize your neighbor, lest you be accused by God of devouring your brother's flesh by your criticism; for it is written: They "eat up my people as they eat bread" and "they have not called upon the Lord" (Psalm 13:4). When you are healthy in your faith, eat whatever is put before you and give

glory to the Lord. If you are offered some food that you do not wish to eat, do not spurn it when all of the others want to eat—and give thanks to the Lord.

Are you sitting at the table to eat? Be attentive to yourself and do not look right and left like an ill-mannered person. A monk who eats everything, when portions of food are put out on the table, is lacking in manners; for the Lord told His Disciples to gather up the fragments that were left over, lest anything should be lost.** Brother, if you should have occasion to drink a cup of wine, go quickly to your cell after the prayers of thanksgiving at the end of the meal, close the door, and give thanks to the Lord Who provides all things. For if people start chattering after they have eaten, this has unpleasant consequences and causes harm. A drunken man does and says inappropriate things in the evening which he regrets in the morning; and if he once more comes across some wine, he does the same thing again. If you have done this just once, guard against it in the future; for it is written: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I St. John 5:18).

Honor all men for the Lord's sake, without demanding honor, and you will find favor with the Lord. Holy Scripture says: "He that reverenceth not the persons of the righteous is not good, such an one will sell a man for a morsel of bread," (Proverbs 28:21); and he who does not respect the person of his brother will be chastised with tribulation. If you are eating with the brothers, dip into the dish*** in turn, that is, in order. The turtle-dove and the swallow take their turns, when coming down to the field from their nests to peck at some seed. In dipping into the dish, do not put on airs before your juniors; that is, do not hold it over them because they are younger. When they reach to take a plate first, you reach out second, so as to maintain equal status with them. Could it be that you remained the whole day without food, my beloved, yet cannot now be patient for one moment? Does it perturb you because the Abbot exhorts both those who are younger and everyone else not to begin the meal, but all of the brothers together to reach out their hands for the plate?****

He who does not talk during mealtimes is like one who eats his bread with honey, whereas he who babbles disturbs the peace. Eat quietly and drink without making a noise. Brother, did you eat bread, and were you satisfied? Give glory to God Who satisfied you. If a small amount was sufficient for you and you ate less than you needed, again give glory within yourself to the Lord, Who strengthened you (in this abstinence), and do not say before the others: "I ate only a little bread."

For if you say this, or are concerned to make known what you have accomplished, you have lost your reward. And if you say it in order to condemn those who eat and give thanks, then you have forfeited all of your toil and surrendered yourself into the hands of your enemies.

* See endnotes for Hypothesis XLIII, Book I—*Trans.*

** These remarks refer to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand men, to say nothing of the women and children, with the five loaves and the two fishes, which Jesus blessed. With the blessing of the Lord, the five loaves and the two fishes were so multiplied that, not only was the entire crowd of people who were following His teaching satisfied, but the Apostles also filled twelve baskets with the fragments that were left over (St. Matthew 14:13-20).

*** In the monasteries of that period, food was placed on the table in a communal dish for all of the brothers, from which each of them would eat in turn, dipping his bread into some seasoning [usually salt—*Trans.*].

**** D. Christaphakopoulos, in his demotic translation of *The Evergetinos* (Vol. II, p. 185; see publication details in our Introduction to *The Evergetinos: A Complete Text*, Book I, p. xxiii), notes that this last sentence was added by Father Paul Evergetinos in order to explain St. Ephraim's somewhat abstruse remarks—*Editors.*

Hypothesis XXIV

Concerning food and drink: how at times we should not partake of certain kinds; and from which kinds we should abstain.

A. From Palladios to Lausos the Prefect

Be manly and very prudent, I beseech you, O Lausos,* servant of God. Be careful not to bind your will on the pretext of pleasing men, as has been the experience of many who, out of inopportune vainglory, have perversely sworn not to eat this or drink that and have enslaved their free will to the fetters of an oath; and who have, subsequently, deplorably violated their oath and, from self-indulgence and negligence or from bodily infirmity or the desire for some pleasure, have tasted the bitterness of perjury. Therefore, when you partake of food with moderation and discretion and, again, when you abstain with discretion, you will never sin; for it is better to drink wine within reason than to drink water with pride. Take as an example those who drink wine with moderation and reverence and those, once more, who have rejected it out of irrational pride.

Joseph drank wine occasionally when he was with the Egyptians, and our Lord Jesus Christ drank it with His Disciples, and they (the Pharisees) reproached Him for being a glutton and a winebibber (St. Matthew 11:19; St. Luke 7:34). By contrast, the Manichæans** and certain Greek sages, who drank only water, were held captive by their egotism and could not escape the ruin that comes from ignorance of God. For these foods and beverages are not inherently reprehensible or praiseworthy; what matters is the disposition of those who use or abuse them.

Regarding those who partake of material things or abstain from them, the Lord said: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (St. Matthew 7:20). These fruits, according to the Apostle Paul, are: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and chastity" (Galatians 5:22-23). He, therefore, who strives to acquire such fruits must practice continence in all things, and accordingly he will not eat, or drink, or live with anyone who has an evil conscience. Thus, when he is healthy, he will avoid foods that fatten, whereas when he is ill, or upset, or in difficult circumstances, or wishes to avert vainglory,

he will use food and drink in moderation as remedies for the healing of soul and body, and he will give thanks to God.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Xanthias once went from Sketis to Terenuthis,*** where he sojourned, so as to rest from the labor of his asceticism. There, he was offered a little wine. Now, some people brought a demoniac for him to heal, and the demon began to insult the Elder, saying: "You have brought me to this winebibber?" The Elder, being a humble man, did not want to cast out the demon; but on account of the mockery, he said: "I believe by God that, even before I shall have finished this cup, you will have been cast out." As soon as the Elder began to drink, the demon cried out: "You are burning me, you are burning me!" And indeed, before the Elder finished the cup of wine, the demon, through the Grace of Christ, came forth out of the demoniac.

C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

During the struggle of abstinence, we must pay attention to the following: not to avoid any food because we find it disgusting or loathe it, for this is accursed and completely demonic. We do not avoid foods that are fattening because they are not good—God forbid—but in order to control the carnal passions, to some extent, through a dry and frugal diet. This is how we chastise the body appropriately, when it is healthy; but when it is sick, we fortify it a little, so that it may aid the soul in its necessary duties and fight the good fight together with it.

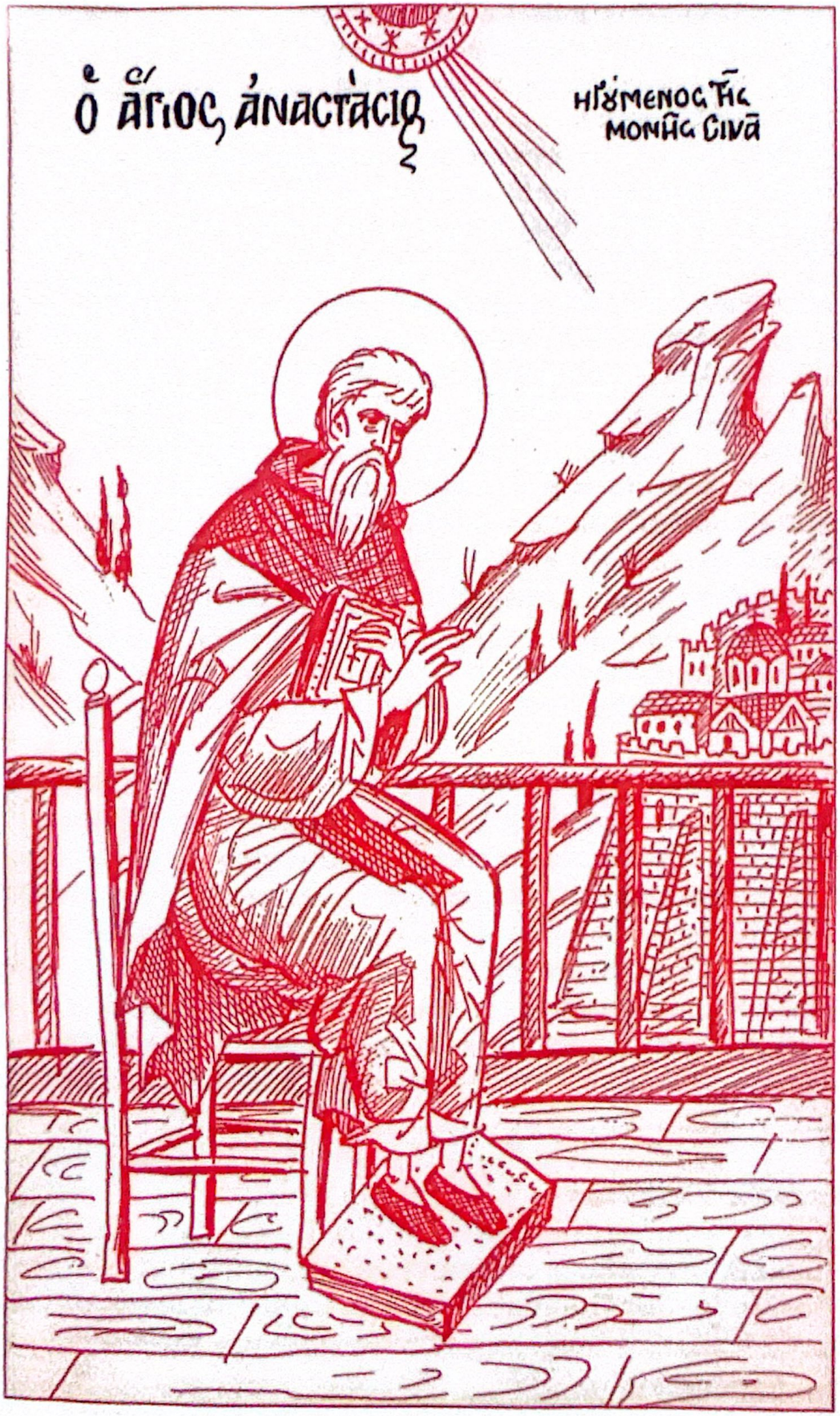
D. From St. Anastasios the Sinaite

Question

If someone swears to do good—for example, not to taste wine for a certain time, or to fast, or to do something similar—and later, out of negligence, cannot carry out what he has undertaken, what should he do?

Answer

In general, it is wrong and harmful to commit ourselves to something like this with an oath; for we ought not to strive for the good out



St. Anastasios, Abbot of Sinai Monastery

of duress, but from free choice. We should not, therefore, bind the freedom of our will to the constraint of an oath, or abstain contemptuously from any of God's creations, on the ground that it is evil, but should use discretion in all matters.

Nonetheless, the blessed Fathers who composed sacred prayers for us wrote a prayer for this circumstance, which frees a man, through a Priest, from the self-imposed bondage of an oath: "...whether they have fallen under their own anathema or have become subject to an oath." It was ordained by God for His true Priests that "Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven" (St. Matthew 18:18). But he who has broken his oath and violated a promise made on oath should acknowledge it before God and reproach himself for carelessness and indifference. For if one who enters into an agreement with a corruptible king does not dare to violate his agreement until death, how much more will he who has made a promise on oath to the immortal and Heavenly King, and who subsequently violates what he has promised, not be judged liable to punishment? Nevertheless, repentance rectifies all things.

E. From St. Diadochos

Those who struggle should have such hatred for irrational desires that this hatred becomes habitual for them. But we ought to observe abstinence from certain foods in such a way that none of us ever comes to the point of loathing these things; for this is accursed and completely demonic. That is, we do not abstain from certain items because they are evil—God forbid; but we do so in order to avoid many useless foods and thereby to chastise the rebellious members of our flesh in a moderate way. Besides, by avoiding such costly foods, we can dispense our surplus so as to satisfy the needs of the poor, which is a mark of sincere love.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

Some Fathers were once summoned to go to Alexandria by the esteemed Archbishop Theophilos to offer prayers at the destruction of the idols.**** While they were eating with him, the Fathers were served veal, which they ate without making an issue of it. At one point, the Archbishop took a piece of meat and offered it to the Elder who was sitting next to him, saying: "Look, this is a good piece. Eat it, Abba." When the

Elders heard him say this, they responded: "We have always, until now, eaten vegetables; now, if this be meat, we will not eat it." And thereafter, none of them tasted of that meat.

* Lausos the Prefect was a patrician in Constantinople, who flourished during the years of Emperor Theodosios I (379-395 A.D.). He had a most luxurious house in Constantinople, near the great Forum of Constantine, on the main street of Constantinople, which was called "Mese" or "Regia" (Divanyolu Avenue, in modern Istanbul, follows closely this ancient street), which was destroyed in the great fire of 476 A.D. It was to him that St. Palladios wrote the *Lausaic History*, from which this lesson is taken, as are all the excerpts in *The Evergetinos* which appear under the name of Palladios.

** Adherents of the religion of Mani were called Manichæans. This religion, which made its appearance in the third century A.D., derived from the ancient Persian religion and was in no way related to Christianity. But when this religion spread to the Roman Empire, it took many principles from Judaism and Christianity, such that, in Asia Minor particularly, the Manichæans passed themselves off as Orthodox. They were detested by the Orthodox, though, and it was considered a grave insult for one to call someone a Manichæan.

*** See the endnotes for Hypothesis XLII, Book I—*Trans.*

**** This is a reference to Patriarch Theophilos I of Alexandria (385-412), who implemented the decree of Emperor Theodosios the Great concerning the closure of pagan temples with such great severity that, out of all of the temples in Egypt, only the Temple of Isis was preserved. This Patriarch was one of the adversaries of St. John Chrysostomos.

Hypothesis XXV

What the warfare of fornication is and how we should struggle against it.

A. From Palladios

The Blessed Evagrios the Deacon was greatly beset by the demon of fornication; and as he, himself, related to us, he stood naked for an entire winter night in a well, so that his flesh might be frozen.

B. From the Same Author

Of the Blessed Ammonios, the disciple of St. Pambo, it is said that he never showed pity for his flesh, whenever unseemly rebellions of pleasure were aroused in his body. Rather, he would burn the members of his body with a hot iron, and thus was continually full of wounds.

C. From the Same Author

The courageous Bishop Philoromos, as he told us, was beset, at the beginning of his monastic life, by a fierce episode of warfare with immorality; he succeeded, however, in casting off this passion from himself, since he completely extinguished it in the same way that we put out a conflagration with an abundance of water. That is, he gave himself over to the most austere self-restraint: he wore chains, closed himself in his cell, and in general ate nothing—even wheat bread—that was cooked over a fire. For eighteen years he committed himself to these things, and with the help of God he made this passion go away completely.

D. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

Satan once went to the ascetic St. Benedict in the guise of a black bird. And so impudently did it fly around his person that, if the Saint had so desired, he could have caught it with his hand. On understanding the ruse of the Enemy, he armed himself with the sign of the Cross and caused the bird to disappear. However, in a short time there arose

within him a fleshly warfare such as he had never before experienced. That is, the Devil took on the form of a woman whom the Saint had once seen, when he was a young man, and appeared before his eyes. So much did this incite fleshly desire in his heart, that for a short time he lost his senses and wavered, wanting to return once more to the world.

At that dramatic moment, however, the salvific Grace of God strengthened him, so that he resolutely warred against the Enemy and won victory over his passions. He fortified himself with thoughts of wisdom and valor of soul; so, seeing a patch of nettles and thorns near him, he removed his clothes and threw himself, naked, into it. For many hours, he rolled in the nettles and thorns, until his whole body was cut and bleeding. Thus, having endured these pains with gallantry, he succeeded in winning his war against the flesh. And from thenceforth, by the Grace of God, never again, during the remaining years of his life, did the demon of immorality dare to annoy him, as he, himself, told his disciples.

E. From the Life of St. Paul of Thebes

In the years of the impious Emperors Decius and Valerian, the unbelievers arrested a certain Saint. Now, among the many tortures which he bore, he was also subjected to the following. The impious ones, on seeing that he was a handsome young man, in the flower of his youth, took this—these cunning individuals—into account and decided to sully not only the body but also the soul of this courageous young man. So, what did they do, and what device did they devise to accomplish it? They took him to a cool garden, all in bloom, where there was a very soft bed, restful for the body. They then placed the athlete on the bed, lying on his back, and, without untying his hands, they left him there alone.

The torturers had in mind something profane and revolting. As they left, they sent in a girl, beautiful of person but of a very ugly and hellish soul. She then lay down next to this athlete of Christ and did every sort of indecent thing: she embraced him, she shamelessly groped—oh, hand of sin—at various parts of his body, and, by all of this, tried to inflame in him the desire for fleshly pleasures.

What was this modest soul to do? What could he do, since he could not flee from this great evil and drive away that profligate girl? Nevertheless, without great difficulty he found a solution, since he so greatly hated immorality. He repaid *eros* with *eros*; to the hellish eroticism of the immoral young woman he responded with his Divine *eros*. And to show

that those who are pure and lovers of God reckon neither the body nor its members of worth, but find it sufficient to preserve their spiritual sobriety, having bitten off his tongue with his teeth and chewed it, the young man spat it in her face, rather than kissing her. He had done quite well in extinguishing passion with passion and pleasure with pain.

F. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder was asked: "Where does the temptation of fornication come from?"

And he answered, "From excessive food and excessive sleep."

2. Another time, the same Elder said: "Man's nature gives rise to desires; but the resistance of asceticism expunges them."

G. From Abba Mark

A young person must bring his youth into submission to the Word of God, so that, in keeping with the demand of the Word, "ye present"—as Holy Scripture says—"your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1); he must exsiccate and chill, as well, every thought of fleshly pleasure by eating and drinking little and by all-night vigils, so that he might be able to say from the depth of his heart: "For I am become like a wineskin in the frost; yet have I not forgotten Thy statutes" (Psalm 118:83). Let him keep in mind that he belongs to Christ, so that he might crucify the flesh, along with its affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24), and mortify his members, which are the seat of the earthly and fleshly pleasures (Colossians 3:5).

He who attains to the crown of true, spotless, and total virginity does not stop his struggle there; but he struggles, in accordance with Apostolic teaching, to mortify even the very thought of the passions and their action in the heart. And yet not even in this does one who with keen love struggles to bring to dwell in his soul Angelic and spotless virginity imagine that he does so truly. Therefore, he prays that there might also be expunged from his thoughts even the memory of simple lusts which come into the mind through its wandering, without any incitement by, or action of, the bodily passions. This, of course, can be achieved only by the power and with the aid of God, as well as the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, though there are, indeed, only a few

worthy of this Grace.

Thus, he who succeeds in gaining the crown of purity and spotless virginity, and is thus wholly possessed by Divine love, crucifies his flesh with ascetic labors, putting to death his earthly members (thereby) through resistance and the maintenance of self-restraint. And having enfeebled the external man and weakened him, as though he had been emaciated by a famine, he is reduced to a virtual skeleton, wherein the inner man is renewed by faith, struggles, and the energy of Grace, moving daily towards better things. He is enlarged in love, made greater in hope, rendered blissful by spiritual joy, rewarded by the peace of Christ, led by kindness, enlightened with prudence and knowledge, made luminous by wisdom, and inclined to humility.

The spiritual faculty being renewed by the Spirit with these and similar virtues, there is revealed within such a man the imprint of the Divine image; he feels spiritual and indescribable beauty, understanding perfectly the self-taught wisdom which one learns on his own from the richness of the moral law implanted in us.

H. From St. Maximos

It is perfectly possible for the demon of fornication to attack, and fiercely, those who are struggling against this passion—and especially against those who are negligent in fasting and are not careful about their interaction with women [or with men, in the case of nuns—*Trans.*]. The mind is little by little seduced by the sweetness of pleasure, and afterwards, when it is quieted, there rush into it, through the memory, various images by which the body is inflamed, so that it is motivated to assent to sin. So, if you do not wish such images to dwell for any great time in your mind, fast, labor, and do vigils, utilizing beneficial silence and unceasing prayer. When the demons draw your mind away from prudence and encircle it, say at this time with tears to the Master, "They have cast me forth, and have now compassed me about" (Psalm 16:11); "Deliver me, O my joy, from them that have compassed me about" (Psalm 31:7).

I. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked Abba Palladios, "Father, what should I do? For three years continually I have fasted for two days, eating every third day. Yet I cannot escape the demon of fornication."

The Elder replied: "When God sent the Prophet Isaiah to the Israelites, He said: 'Cry aloud, spare not..., and shew My people their transgression. ...They seek Me daily. ...They take delight in approaching Me. "Wherefore have we fasted," they say, "and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?"' And He answered them as follows: 'Nay, in the days of your fasts ye find your pleasures, and all of them that are under your power ye wound; ye fast and smite the lowly; ...ye fast for quarrels and strifes, and smite the lowly, ...so that your voices may be heard in crying. I have not chosen such a fast,' saith the Lord; '...neither though thou shouldest bend down thy neck as a ring, and spread under the sackcloth and ashes, neither thus shall ye call a fast acceptable' (Isaiah 58:1-5).

"And you then, my child, if you fast from food but speak ill of someone, or condemn him, or despise him, or entertain immoral thoughts, or make your mind to succumb to some pleasure or something that is forbidden, how can you free yourself from the battle with immorality? Or are you unaware of the fact that one who satisfies his desires mentally becomes sated and drunk, even without material food and drink? Thus, if you wish for your fasting to be acceptable before God, protect yourself, above all, against every evil thought, against backbiting and condemnation, and heed nothing of the vain things that you hear, as Holy Scripture says. Purify your heart of all fleshly and spiritual stains, from every hatred and all sordid gain; subdue your flesh with many prostrations, vigils, and like labor, and by spiritual contemplation of the Word of God; and when you are ready for sleep, do not lie comfortably on your bed, but sleep sitting up. When a young man is formed by these and similar labors, he can, by the Grace of God, be victorious in the warfare against fornication.

"It is for this reason that the Fathers appointed that we should not live in cells or in a hermitage, but in a cœnobitic monastery, so that we might subdue our bodies with greater labors. They have further instructed us to be clothed in coarse and torn garments, and not soft things; and further, that our Superiors should direct and look after us with care. For idleness and comfort, and two meals a day and too much sleep, as a rule, awaken in us not only the demon of fornication, but also the demons of indifference, vanity, and pride."

2. Abba Anthony said: "I am of the opinion that the soul has implanted in it by nature a proclivity towards pleasures; it does not act, however, without the heart so desiring. It remains in our soul as a pas-

sive motivation. There is, also, another kind of motivation towards pleasure, which is born of attention to the nourishment of our bodies by food and drink, from which a warmth is generated that inclines the body towards the pleasures. For this reason, the Apostle Paul commands us: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess' (Ephesians 5:18). And our Lord says in His Gospel: 'And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness' (St. Luke 21:34). There is yet another proclivity in those who struggle: that which is instigated by the contrivance and envy of the demons. We should understand, then, that there are three kinds of causes behind fleshly desires: one natural, the second caused by the abuse of food, and the third stemming from the demons. It is to the benefit of the struggler to know well the difference between these and not to be ignorant of their cause, so as to confront each one in the appropriate manner."

3. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "What am I to do, since I am attacked by fornication and anger?"

The Elder replied: "David says, 'And he smote the lion and strangled the bear' (I Kings 17:34-37). This means that we must cut off anger with patience and trample down the passion of immorality with labors and fasting."

4. Abba Phokas related the following: "When Abba Iakovos went to the skete, he suffered greatly from the demon of fornication. Having approached the dangerous point of sinning, he visited me and confessed. Afterwards, he said to me:

"'Tomorrow I am going to a certain cave. I ask you, therefore, for the Lord's sake, to say nothing of me to anyone. I plan on staying forty days, and when I have completed them, please do me the favor of coming to find me, bringing with you Holy Communion. And if I have died, bury me; if, however, I am still alive, grant me to partake of Holy Communion.'

"Having said this, he left.

"Now, when the forty days had passed, I gathered Holy Communion, along with a little common bread and some food, and set off to meet him. But as soon as I approached the cave, I smelled a terrible odor, which was coming forth from his body; and I said to myself, 'The blessed man has reposed.' When I entered into the cave, I found him lying down, half dead. On seeing me, he moved his right hand a bit, such that he made me to understand that he wanted to commune. I told

him that I had Holy Communion with me.

"He then opened his mouth a little, with great difficulty, and I, taking a small portion of the Holy Body and Life-Giving Blood, placed it in his mouth. As soon as he communed, he became stronger. Afterwards, I broke away a few pieces from the common bread and, having offered it to him, he took it; and little by little, he took as much as he could. Thus, being strengthened, by the Grace of Christ he left the cave and went back to his cell. After this respite in asceticism, he was by God's Grace freed from his ruinous battle with fornication."

5. Fornication warred against a brother; and the warfare was like a fire that burned in his heart day and night. He struggled, however, to make no concession to his thoughts. After a long period of time, the warfare went away, not having been able to harm the brother in any way, on account of the patience which he showed. Thereupon, a light was kindled in his heart.

6. Another brother, the disciple of a great Elder, was also beset by the demon of fornication, against which he struggled with valor. His Elder, seeing his labors, said to him: "Would you like me to ask God to free you from this warfare?"

"Even though I am exhausted by labor," the disciple replied, "I nonetheless see the fruit of my labor; therefore, please ask God to give me patience, that I might endure."

"You have labored well," the Elder told him, "and have surpassed me."

7. An Elder said to a certain brother against whom the demon of fornication was battling:

"Brother, do you expect to be rescued by sleeping? Go and labor; feel pain; and ask, that you might receive. Go without sleep and knock at the door of mercy, which will be opened to you. There are, in the world, those thrice-blessed who have earned crowns of victory because, though they took many hits, they remained firm and were strengthened. There are many instances when a single person, though assailed by two others, has been strengthened by his wounds and has won over those who assailed him. If, then, these show such endurance for the sake of physical victory, should not you struggle with even greater stamina for the Kingdom of Heaven, having, indeed, God as your partner in battle?"

8. There was a struggling brother living in Sketis. The Enemy brought to his mind the memory of a beautiful woman whom he had once seen in Egypt, and he became very agitated. Now, by Providence he went to visit another brother, who had returned to the skete from Egypt. As they were speaking, the brother told him that the wife of a certain man had died. It happened to be the woman who was the object of his warfare. On hearing this, the struggling brother put on his outer cassock, went to Egypt, and asked after this woman. Having learned about her, he went to the cemetery during the night and opened her grave. He rubbed the skin of the corpse with his outer cassock and—soaked as it was with the fluids from the dead body and giving off an insufferable smell—took it with him, returning to his cell. From that time on, whenever he was overcome by the thought of fornication, he placed before him the smelly cassock and said in his mind: "There, now you have the pleasure that you seek. Fill yourself of it." Thus he tortured himself with that unbearable smell, until his temptations completely left him.

9. Someone once came to Sketis to become a monk, bringing with him his young son, who had only shortly before been weaned from his mother's milk. The son remained with the father for some time in his cell. The boy grew up and became a man. And he began to battle fearfully with the flesh. And since he could not bear this, he said to his father:

"I am going into the world, because I cannot withstand this warfare."

His father asked him not to do this.

"Abba, allow me to leave," the son insisted, "because there is nothing else I can do."

"My child, hear me one last time," his father said. "Take with you forty grams of bread and enough palm leaves for forty days of work, and go deep into the desert. Remain there for forty days and let the Will of the Lord be done."

The young man indeed obeyed his father. He rose, went into the desert, and remained there with his work; he plaited the dry palm leaves and ate the dry bread.

Now then, after he had spent twenty days and nights in the desert, there appeared before him the Tempter in the form of a dark-skinned woman; but she gave off such an odor that he could not stand it. Therefore, with all of his power, he repulsed her. The dark-skinned woman,

as soon as he had pushed her away, said to him: "I, who appear with sweetness to the hearts of men, you now repulse? Know, however, that through your obedience and your labor, God did not allow me to trap you. He revealed to you my stench." After that, the young man arose, thanked God, and returned to his father.

"I no longer want to go back to the world, Abba," he said to his father, "for I have seen the power of Satan and its stench."

The father, having been informed by God, in the meantime, of the boy's vision, told him: "Had you remained in the desert for forty days and faithfully kept my command, you would have seen even greater things."

10. Likewise, another Elder also came to Sketis, bringing his son with him. Since he was at the time still a baby and of suckling age, he did not even know what a woman was. When he grew up into manhood, the demons appeared to him in his sleep as women; he confessed to his father everything that he had seen, and his father was amazed by the craftiness of the enemies of our souls.

The father once went to Egypt, together with his son, and having encountered women, the son said to the father:

"Abba, those are the ones who visited me during the night in the skete."

"My child, these are city monks," the father responded. "They have one form, those in the desert another."

After that, they returned straightway to their cell.

11. "What am I do to when indecent thoughts darken my mind?" a brother asked a certain Elder.

The Elder replied: "A mother, when she wants to wean her baby, rubs squill [a bitter plant—*Trans.*] on her breast. Then the child comes, as he is accustomed, to suckle; but as soon as he tastes the squill, he flees from its bitterness. You, too, must apply squill."

From the Same Work

12. The same brother asked another Elder about similar thoughts.

The Elder answered him: "I have never experienced warfare with such a thing."

Hearing this, the brother was scandalized and, getting up, left without even asking the Elder's leave. He immediately went to visit another

Elder and told him, "This is what a certain Elder told me, and I was scandalized, since what he told me is beyond human nature."

The Elder replied: "The man of God did not tell you this off-handedly (without it having a certain meaning). Therefore, go back right away, do a prostration, and ask him to tell you the meaning of his words."

And, indeed, the brother immediately returned to the first Elder. Making a prostration, he said to him: "Forgive me, Abba, that I so rudely left without your leave. But I beg of you, explain to me how it is that you have never been beset by the demon of fornication."

The Elder then answered him:

"Since the time that I became a monk, I have never eaten, drunk, or slept to satiation; and since this privation greatly besets me, I have never felt the warfare of which you speak."

Benefited by this reply, the brother left for his cell.

13. A certain brother was fiercely attacked by the demon of fornication. Four demons, transformed into the most beautiful of women, appeared before him and for forty days remained with him, struggling to lure him into indecent acts. He struggled in a manly way, however, and was not overcome. So God, seeing his endurance, removed this warfare from him and gave him the gift of no longer being tempted by the fires of the flesh.

14. A brother asked a certain Elder: "My belly causes me distress, and I cannot control it. For this reason, my flesh becomes inflamed."

The Elder responded to these things: "If you do not place fear and fasting upon these things, you will not progress well on the Godly path."

So that he might understand better, the Elder told him the following parable. "A man was once riding astride a donkey. The donkey strayed from the paved road, taking the man here and there. So the traveller struck him some blows with the stick he was holding. The donkey said to him: 'Don't strike me. From now on I will follow the right road.' When they had gone some distance, the man got down from the donkey and put his stick in the saddle bag. The donkey did not know that the stick was on top of him. So, seeing that his master was not carrying the stick, he ignored him and began once more to wander from the correct path and walk here and there among the cultivated fields. When the man saw this, he ran, grabbed his stick, and repeatedly beat the don-

key until he once more got on the paved road.

"This is what happens with the body," the Elder said, bringing his comments to conclusion. "When the flesh is inflamed and causes you to wander from the Godly path, strike it with fasting, and it will return again to the right path. Let the body be found always under the control of fasting, together with the fear of God."

Hypothesis XXVI

That it is not possible for one to be delivered from warfare with fornication by any means, save by the aid of God, which comes to those who struggle. What perfect chastity is.

A. From Palladios

The Blessed Moses the Egyptian, who was formerly the leader of a large band of thieves and later became an experienced monk, a Presbyter [Hieromonk—*Trans.*], and an equal of the great Fathers, was beset greatly with the demon of fornication on first becoming a monk, such that for a short time he was ready to give up his goal. However, he battled against the Enemy with strict fasting and silence. He shut himself inside his cell, on the advice of Isidore the Great, who lived in the skete, and for a long time he did not go out at all. He ate nothing more than a *litron** of dry bread, worked very hard, and prayed five times a day. In addition, he fought the Enemy of the soul with vigils, not sleeping at all during the night for a full six years; and though his body became completely emaciated, he nonetheless continued to be tortured by the passions and to have dreams, without so willing. After this, he undertook another austere practice; that is, during the night he would leave his cell and go to the cells of the older monks, who could not fetch their own water; and having taken their jugs, without their knowing it, he would fill them, since the well was a distance of some five *semeia*** from the cells.

Now, one night, just as he was bending over the well to fill the jug of a certain monk, a demon struck him on the back with a club, and he thereupon fell down, as though dead. The deceitful and hateful demon could not endure the forbearance of this spiritual athlete. The next day, a monk went to the well and found the Saint lying on the ground and dying; he returned immediately to Isidore the Great and reported the matter. So Isidore went, along with several others, picked up Moses, and took him to the Church; he was so injured that only after a whole year did he gain his strength.

When Moses had recovered, the great Priest of Christ, Isidore, said to him:

"From now and henceforth, stop your struggle with the demons, Brother Moses, and do not oppose them so ruthlessly; for there must be a certain moderation in the ascetic struggle against the demons."

To these things, the diamond of Christ, Moses, replied:

"I will not stop my battle against them, until my nighttime fantasies come to an end."

[Isidore replied:] "By the power of the name of Christ, from this moment on these Satanic dreams will cease for you. From now on, you will pray and partake of the Divine Mysteries. It was so that you might not have occasion to think that by your ascetic efforts you conquered this passion that you were so tortured by Satan; this was for your benefit, so that you did not become proud."

Having listened, Abba Moses returned to his cell, and from that time forward, he took care to live in silence and to struggle with moderation; and he was delivered from this hellish passion.

From the Same Author

In the skete there dwelled a certain ascetic, by the name of Pachon, who lived to be about seventy years old. Now, it so happened that I began to be bothered by the demon of lust, being tortured by indecent thoughts and upset by demonic fantasies during the night. Since I did not want to confide in anyone regarding my situation, driven by my passion I wandered out into the desert. Hardly realizing it, I went deep into the desert, where I remained for fifteen days with some holy men from the skete, among whom was Pachon.

Finding him to be the most experienced and ascetic among these men, I screwed up the courage to confide my thoughts to him. The Saint, in response, said to me: "Do not be perplexed by this thing, because you are not suffering from spiritual indolence; this is evidenced by where you are, by the fact that even the necessities of life here are sparse, and by the fact that you do not have any interaction with women. What is happening to you is probably from the Enemy (of our souls), since you are seeking after virtue. The warfare of fornication, then, is of three kinds: in the one case, we are attacked by the flesh, when we excessively attend to it; in another case, the passions are incited by our thoughts; and in certain circumstances, the demon of lust tyrannizes us because of its envy. This I have verified after having seen much. As you see, I am an old man, and I have spent forty years in my cell seeking after my salvation. But even at this age, I am often tempted."

And he swore to me that, "having reached fifty years of age, for twelve years Satan would not leave me at peace from his attack, neither by night nor by day. Having concluded that God had abandoned me and that for this reason I was being tortured, I stupidly decided that it was better to die than to be led astray by this passion and to do something indecent. So, leaving my cell, I criss-crossed the desert. I found a hyena's cave and sat in front of it naked, waiting for the beasts to devour me. In the afternoon, the beasts, a male and a female, came out of the cave and, having sniffed me from head to foot, went away from me.

"I remained there, outstretched, until morning, since I thought that I would be eaten; but afterwards, I saw that God had certainly shown mercy on me, and thus arose and went to my cell. The demon waited a few days, but then attacked me again, more fiercely than ever. I suffered so greatly that for a moment I even cursed. Indeed, the demon transformed itself into an Ethiopian woman whom I once saw in my youth, during harvest time, following behind the reapers and gathering the gleanings. She sat on my knees and so inflamed me, that I imagined that I was indeed lying with her. But, mad from my lust, I gave her a slap and she disappeared; and believe me when I tell you that for two full years I could not rid my hand of the stench.

"This made me even more faint of soul and led me to despair. Finally, I went again into a most inhospitable desert and wandered aimlessly. There I found a small asp and, grabbing it with my hands, I placed it on my private parts, so that it could bite me and I would die. I put the head of the snake on my privates, since I thought them to be the cause of my temptation; but in spite of all of this, it did not bite me, under the guidance of Divine Grace.

"After that, I heard a voice in my mind. 'Go, Pachon,' it said, 'and struggle; for I have let you be tormented for so long, so that you would not be overcome by pride, perhaps thinking that by your own power you conquered the demon of lust. So, knowing your weakness, never depend on your own asceticism, but run to the help of God.'

"Following this internal revelation, I returned to my cell; I took greater courage and thereafter no longer gave attention to the assault of a madness for women. I found peace from this battle for the rest of my days, and the demon, when he saw that I was ignoring him, was humiliated—and after that, he never came near me."

With these words about his wrestlings with Satan, St. Pachon made me to be more valiant in my labors and taught me to suffer my battle without grumbling. Afterwards, he wished me a good journey, having

advised me to confront all things with valor.

From the Same Author

There once lived a virtuous ascetic whose name was Elias. He greatly loved nuns, in a Christ-like way, and cared for those who were the sickest among them. Indeed, there are such souls, whose end testifies to the fact that they do such things out of virtue. Out of sympathy for female ascetics, and having the economic means to do so, he built a large convent in one of the cities of Africa. He gathered there all of the destitute nuns; thereafter, he cared for them, assuring them with every comfort and whatever was commensurate with the ascetic life. However, the nuns, having come from various social classes, and each having her own custom, fought among themselves continually; and it took him two years to pacify them.

Thereupon, the Enemy of souls tempted him with the desire for carnal pleasures. He thus immediately left the convent and wandered for two days in the desert, hungry. He besought God, saying: "Lord, either let me die, that I might not behold the nuns and cause them distress, or take my passion from me, so that I can care for them with peace of soul." There were about three hundred nuns.

Night having fallen, he slept in the desert. But as he related this himself, three Angels visited him. They said to him: "Why did you flee the convent?" He explained to them the situation, adding: "I feared that I might harm both my soul and theirs."

"If we deliver you from your passion," they asked him, "will you return and care for them?" Elias agreed with their proposal.

Then, one of the Angels took his feet and the other his head, and the third took a razor knife and cut off his privates—not, of course, in actuality, but in his vision. It was evident to him, in his ecstasy, that he had been cured. Thereupon, the Angels asked him: "Do you feel some benefit?"

"I have greatly benefited," he replied, "and have been set free. I am, indeed, free of any pain or passion."

After this acknowledgement, they once again spoke to him: "Return, then, to your place of ascetic labor."

In fact, after five days he arrived back, where all were mourning his disappearance. He went inside, and from henceforth he lived in a small cell near the convent, from which he took responsibility for the nuns and, when it was needed, corrected them. And he lived for another forty

years. Never, as the Fathers witness, did the passion for women come to his mind, and with this gift of passionlessness he came to a blessed end.

B. From Abba Isaiah

If you apply yourself to asceticism, do not let your heart take its courage from this, thinking that it will somehow protect you. Say in your mind that, "Since I submit my body to hardships, God hears my affliction."

C. From Abba Cassian

1. According to the Apostle, if we are truly interested in competing lawfully and being crowned with victory (II St. Timothy 2:5), when we have conquered the spirit of fornication, let us not base our courage on our own power or on our asceticism, but in the aid of God our Master. For a man will never cease being beset by this spirit, until he truly believes that he cannot be freed from this infirmity and be lifted up to the loftiness of purity, save by the protection and aid of God, and not by his own care and labor.

For, indeed, the matter is beyond human nature and, in a certain way, one who wishes to overcome the passions of the flesh and its pleasures must overcome the limits of nature. However, it is impossible for man to achieve this on his own—that is, to ascend on his own wings, if I may put it this way, to this lofty and heavenly prize of holiness and become an imitator of the Angels—if Divine Grace does not lift him above the world and its mire. For by no other virtue whatever, except for chastity, are fleshly men rendered like unto the spiritual and supernatural Angels. By this virtue, that is, even if they are found living on the earth, men have, according to the Apostle, their conversation in Heaven (Philippians 3:20).

And an indication that we have attained perfectly to this virtue is that our hearts, when we sleep, do not retreat into indecent dreams. Because, even if this movement of the heart during sleep is not considered a sin, nonetheless it indicates that the heart is infirm and that it has not yet been freed from passion. Thus, we must understand that the indecent fantasies that come to us in sleep expose our earlier indolence and weakness. The infirmity that is hidden in the recesses of our heart is revealed by the pollution which befalls us during the rest of sleep. For those who have reached the acme of holiness do not, even in sleep, re-

treat into the sinful fantasies of dreams; nor, when they are awake, do they feel at all the impulse of sinful desire.

2. I was acquainted with such a man in the skete where I was—a man adorned with the brightest crown of purity. Even in his face, the purity of his soul shined forth. He, by the aid of Divine Grace, had surpassed the limits of nature and had wholly banished the very impulse of lust. For, as I ascertained from those who knew him well, he had entreated God fervently with fasting, vigils, and tears to grant him the gift of chastity; and in fact, finally the good Master granted his petition. In a vision one night, he saw an Angel who opened up his abdomen, it seemed, and with his hand pulled a mass of flesh from his entrails; and then, after this surgical procedure, the Angel made his abdomen whole again.

"There," the Angel said, "I have removed that which stirs fleshly passion; know that from today on, the purity which you sought with faith and patience has been given you by God."

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A struggling brother who was bothered by thoughts of fornication sought refuge in Abba Agathon.

"What can I do?" he asked him.

"Go," the Elder replied, "and humble yourself before God, and He will give you rest."

2. It is said of Amma Sarah*** that for thirteen years she was intensely beset by the demon of fornication and never once asked that this warfare depart from her. On the contrary, she said: "O my God, strengthen me." Now, one day, when she was being strongly bothered by vile thoughts, she went up to her room to pray; and there the spirit of fornication appeared to her in bodily form.

"So, you have conquered me, Sarah?" he asked.

"I have not conquered you," she said, "but the Master Christ," she answered him.

3. A certain man abandoned the world and went to a skete to become a monk. He was a struggler. It happened that the Evil One, out of envy, warred against him by inspiring in him the desire for a woman. As soon as this warfare appeared, he revealed it to the Fathers. They, know-

ing that he was a struggler, appointed some ascetic labors for him, which he readily fulfilled. From these labors, his body became so weak, that he could not even rise up.

By the Providence of God, a Father from another area was visiting the skete. Having visited a number of the Elders, he passed by the cell of the monk in question. He was surprised however, since, though the door of the cell was open, when he passed by no one came out to meet him. And he said to himself: "Oh, my. Perhaps the monk who lives in this cell is ill."

So, approaching the cell, he knocked; but no one appeared. Therefore, he went in, where he found the aforementioned monk lying ill.

"What is wrong with you, Father?" he inquired.

In reply, the monk related to him his tortures; that is, that he was being attacked by the desire for a woman, that he had told this to the Fathers, and that they had appointed various ascetic labors, which he had fulfilled. Ending his explanation, he said: "Though my body has fallen ill, the battle has simply become greater."

Hearing this, the Elder said:

"The Fathers, in their strength, rightly gave you these ascetic labors. If you so care, however, listen to me, the humble one. Abandon these ascetic labors, since you have found them to be of no benefit, eat a little of your food at the proper time and do a small portion of your services. Place your cares and your weakness before the Lord (Psalm 54:23), for with your efforts alone you will not be able to overcome this warfare.

"Keep in mind that our body is like a covering. If you care for it, it will last; if you neglect it, it will come to naught."

The monk in fact did as the Elder from afar had told him, and in a few days the warfare was taken from him.

4. There was an anchorite who was a true virgin, knowing nothing of women, let alone what fornication was. He once surmised that men possess their privates for the purpose of passing water, just as a jug has a spout, so that one can pour out the water inside it. On the heels of this thought, looking up, he saw demons, flying about like black images; and they incited lust in him. His desire was aroused, but without his knowing, on account of his lack of experience, precisely what it was that he desired.

One day, then, the Devil produced before him a man committing a sinful act with a woman. God, seeing the vicious evil of the demon, protected the brother and led him to seek out a great Elder, who taught him

how to fight against the demons and, afterwards, let him return to his cell. On his return, the monk struggled, calling on God. And, indeed, God gave him the strength to so progress in spiritual life that he was deemed worthy to receive a great gift: that is, the ability to know (by Divine Grace) whether the soul of someone who was dying was in a good or bad state and where it would go.

5. A brother who was living in the desert was bothered by lustful thoughts. So, he went and found a hyena's den and, going into it, remained there for six days without food. When the hyena came, he saw it and was afraid. "My Lord," he said, "if there is a chance that I might defile my body, then give this beast power over me; otherwise, save me from it." And he forthwith heard a voice, which said: "Having made him a eunuch [for the Kingdom], set him free"; and the warfare was immediately lifted from him.

* A "*litron*" is today a measure of weight, equal to 360 grams. [Like the Roman *litra*, the *litron* was originally used for measuring weight, and specifically grain. This is about a third of a kilogram of bread, or approximately twelve ounces (roughly eight slices of dense bread from a one-pound loaf)—*Trans.*]

** "*Semeion*," here, refers to a distance on the road, on which markers were placed, so that travellers could see their way. [See further details in the endnotes for Hypothesis XX, Book I—*Trans.*]

*** "Amma" or "Ammas" corresponds to "Abba," when we are referring to a convent. Just as the Abbot of a monastery is called "Abba" or "Abbas," so the Abbess of a convent is called "Amma." (The essential meaning of the word is "Mother," the counterpart of "Father.")

Hypothesis XXVII

The honor of chastity and the dishonor of fornication; the reward and the recompense of each, both in the present life and in the future life.

A. From St. Ephraim

Do you wish to learn, brother, how grievous and pernicious fornication is? Reflect on the fact that those who could not be killed by serpents' bites in the wilderness were laid low by fornication in Madiam [or Midian—*Trans.*] and this is why they did not refuse to eat even meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Because of this transgression, twenty-three thousand people fell dead in a single day.*

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked an Elder: "What should I do, Abba, for the spirit of fornication is warring terribly against me?" The Elder said to him: "Be sure to safeguard yourself against this urge as much as you can; for whoever is overcome by it is in danger of losing every hope of his salvation.

"A boat, when it is contending with tempests, heavy seas, and waves, courts danger if it loses its rudder; yet still remains afloat. Likewise, if the mast is broken, or some other piece of equipment that ensures the safety of the voyage is lost, the passengers still have good reason for hoping that the vessel will be saved.

"So is it also with a monk. He can expect to prevail, through repentance, over any passion that overcomes him by way of his slothfulness or indolence. However, if he falls even once into the passion of fornication, he loses hope, like one who has been shipwrecked after his boat has sunk."

2. An Elder said: "A little absinthe** ruins an entire container of honey, and a single bodily sin expels a man from the Kingdom of Heaven and relegates him to the Gehenna of fire. Flee from such sin as from fire, O humble monk, lest you be consumed by it."

C. From St. Ephraim

1. Just as incense arouses pleasant feelings in us, so also the Holy Spirit delights in chastity and dwells in a chaste man. Again, just as a pig enjoys rolling in mud, so also do the demons take delight in the stench of fornication. Brilliant light, joy, peace, and patience reside in chastity, whereas grief, torpor, insatiable sleep, and thick darkness are yoked to fornication. Love chastity, O monk, with the love of Christ; for it befits your ascetic life, just as an adze is suitable for a carpenter.

2. Brother, do not be so fearlessly attentive to adorning your body, but be mindful of what the Apostle says: "Flee also youthful lusts" (II St. Timothy 2:22). Do you not know with what kind of foe you are grappling? Are you not aware that it is a terrible thing to be a cause of scandal to another soul? Know this also: that if the outer man is adorned and handsome, but the soul within is filthy, it will not be long before physical beauty decays. But if you acquire beauty of soul, this beauty will comport with the outer man, and such beauty will endure.

* The events to which the author is here alluding are as follows: While journeying in the wilderness, the Hebrews started out from Mount Or and encircled the land of Edom. But the people grew faint-hearted on the way, being deprived of bread and water, and they began to murmur against Moses. God then became angry with the Hebrews and sent venomous serpents against them, and anyone who was bitten by the serpents died. Thus did "many people of the children of Israel" die. The people repented for their sin and asked Moses to beseech God to save them. Then Moses, at the command of God, fashioned a brass serpent, which he set up in an elevated place; if anyone who had been bitten by the serpents turned his gaze toward the brazen serpent, he was saved (Numbers 21:4-9). When, later on, the Hebrews reached Sattin, in the land of Moab, they polluted themselves by fornicating with the daughters of Moab and ate meat that had been sacrificed to idols—something which was strictly forbidden; and they also worshipped idols. The Lord was angry on account of their impiety and commanded Moses to punish the transgressors. Moses gave orders to the tribes of Israel that each man should punish his neighbor who had fallen into sin. Twenty-four thousand Hebrews received the punishment of death at that time, many more than had died from the serpents' bites (Numbers 25:1-9).

** Absinthe, or wormwood, is an undershrub of the genus *Artemisia*. It is aromatic and very bitter. Both absinthe and the essence derived from it are widely used in pharmacology today. In the present context, the Elder means that if a small quantity of absinthe, with its great bitterness, is put into a container of honey, it will spoil the honey.

Hypothesis XXVIII

That to accept evil thoughts and not to reject them immediately is worthy of chastisement, just as are looking inquisitively and saying or hearing shameful things; likewise, one who assents (to shameful thoughts) is punished in the same way as one who carries them out; the spirit of fornication assails us in many and various ways, and for this reason we should always be on our guard against it.

A. From the Life of St. Evthymios

A brother from Rome by the name of Aimilianus ["Emilianus" or "Aemilianus"; "Aimilianos," in the Greek rendering of his name—*Trans.*] once dwelled in the Lavra* of St. Evthymios. He lived a virtuous life, having from his youth embraced chastity to the highest degree. One night, towards daybreak on Sunday, the Enemy of our souls stirred up terrible carnal warfare against him, which he was unable ultimately to withstand; and for this reason he began to give way and submit to shameful thoughts. In this state, and beset by passion, at dawn he encountered the Saint, who was coming to Church for the Matins service. Aimilianus was emitting a stench that disturbed the great ascetic, thereby disclosing the brother's grievous passion to him.

On smelling that foul odor and perceiving the working of Satan, St. Evthymios rebuked the evil demon who was harassing the brother, and at once the latter fell to the ground on his back, tearing at himself, trembling, and frothing at the mouth. In the meantime, many monks had gathered around him.

After ordering them to bring him a light, since the place was dark and unlit, St. Evthymios the Great said to the assembled monks: "Brothers and Fathers, do you see this brother? He has lived a virtuous life from boyhood and cultivated chastity; but now, having yielded a little to carnal passions, he lies stretched out before us, a sight worthy of tears! This is why each one of us should guard his mind with all attentiveness, lest the Enemy delude us with some fantasy and thus entice us into the pit of perdition. In other words, if some shameful thought enters our minds in such a way as to stimulate us with licentious desire,

and we do not make haste to battle against it right from the outset, but accept it with some degree of pleasure, then not only will we not be free from sin, but even if we do not commit fornication with our bodies, we will assuredly be judged by God for having committed fornication in our minds."

He went on to recount a beneficial story which, as he said, he had heard from some Egyptian Elders. "There was once a certain man in a city, of whom it was thought by everyone that he lived a wondrous life. They all supposed that he had acquired great closeness to God; in reality, however, he angered Him with the secret movements of his heart. That is to say, he was quick to give assent to shameful thoughts, such that he easily fell into sin, if not in deed, at any rate in his mind.

"On one occasion, this man was seriously ill and was on his deathbed; he already saw death approaching him. All of the citizens were lamenting, and both young and old were in tears, imploring that, if it were possible, they should die before that man—in short, they preferred to suffer this evil themselves than to see the death of a man whose praises they all sang.

"In the meantime, a certain clairvoyant Elder arrived in the city. He saw all of the people weighed down with grief and heard the crowd lamenting in anguish with these words: 'O the saint, our father and our savior, by whose intercessions before God we have all been saved! What hope of salvation do we have from now on? What security will we have after his death?'

"For this reason, after all that he had seen and heard, the Elder ran quickly to the dying man to ask for his blessing. When he drew close, he saw the leaders of the city, the clergy, and even the Bishop himself holding candles in their hands and waiting for the man's death and for the body to be carried out. Pushing his way through the crowd, he approached the dying man, whom he found still breathing. Then, with the eyes of his soul, he saw a sight worthy of tears, terrible for anyone to behold and hear! It appeared to him that someone was holding a fiery trident and thrusting it into that man's heart, and that—alas!—he was uprooting his soul from him in a violent frenzy. He also seemed to hear a voice from Heaven saying: 'Just as this soul did not give Me even one day's respite, so you, too, do not cease tearing at it, uprooting it by force, and punishing it.'"

Such was the story that Evthymios related to the brothers who were present; and after this he counseled them: "Be ever attentive and ever prepared, and reflect on the departure of your souls from your bodies.

Let Aimilianus here be an example for you. God had such great disdain for him and allowed him to be tormented so pitiably before our eyes by the malignant demon of hedonism, in order that you might correct yourselves and profit from his chastisement. But let us beseech God that He relieve this man from such a trial."

St. Evthymios the Great immediately offered a prayer for the brother, and at the same moment the place was filled with a stench, like that of burning sulphur. Along with the stench, they heard a voice, which said: "I am the demon of fornication." After that, Brother Aimilianus at once arose, calm and in his right mind. After what had happened to him, he became a true vessel of election, like the Divine Apostle (Acts 9:15).

Finally, St. Evthymios gave the following instructions to the brothers: "Endeavor to protect any one of the brothers who is struggling against inappropriate thoughts, and let him constantly receive advice, teaching, and admonition, lest he be deceived and overcome, thereby incurring a lamentable fall at the hands of the Devil."

B. From the Life of St. Savvas

The Blessed Savvas was once travelling to the Jordan, together with a young novice. On the road, they encountered a crowd of laypeople, among whom was a girl with an attractive face—a snare for the eyes of the unwary, from which it was not easy for anyone to escape.

After they had passed by, in order to test his disciple, Savvas asked him: "How did that young woman strike you? I think that she had only one eye." "No, Father," replied the novice, "she had both of her eyes." "Perhaps you have made a mistake, my son," Savvas insisted, "for the girl's one eye had been somewhat ineptly removed."

But the novice, not understanding that his wise Elder had posed this question in order to test him, and that he was seeking to learn from him that which he himself knew well, persisted. "No, my Father, her two eyes were bright and very beautiful to behold."

Savvas then answered him (sternly): "How do you know this and why do you keep insisting on it?" "I paid close attention to her," he replied, "and I am sure that she had both of her eyes."

And so, since the novice was now ensnared, the Divine Savvas began thereafter to rebuke him openly. "Whatever happened to the injunction not to turn your gaze towards a woman (*cf.* Proverbs 6:25 and 9:18) and not to be caught by your eyes? From now on, therefore, you

will no longer keep company with me, nor will you stay in my cell, until you get into the habit of not letting your gaze rove this way and that, but rather of keeping your eyes fixed in one direction."

After telling him these things, he sent the novice straight to the monastery enclosure. He remained there for a long time, and he was well schooled, so to speak, by true repentance and pain of heart, and was chastised for that sensuous movement of his eye. In view of this, the Blessed Savvas accepted him back and numbered him with the other monks gathered in cells around him.

C. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said to the nuns who had gathered around her: "Each one of us should be well aware of her calling, not lapsing into what is base, but always desiring higher things. You should not ignore the Gospel parable about the hundred, the sixty, and the thirty (St. Matthew 13:8). The hundred symbolize our own calling [that of monasticism—*Trans.*], the sixty the rank of those who practice continence [in the world], and the thirty those who live prudently [in the married state].

"Now, it is good for us to pass from the thirty to the sixty, because it is good for one to advance from the lesser to the greater, whereas it is hazardous to fall from the greater to the lesser. For, he who has once inclined towards what is worse will be unable to stop at this, until he has sunk to the depth of perdition.

"Some women, who have promised to preserve their virginity and are not steadfast in their intention, are enticed by their reasoning. Thus, they make excuses in sins, and say to themselves: 'If we live prudently [*"sophronos"—Trans.*]—or rather, I would say, foolishly [*"aphronos"—Trans.*]—we will at least gain the thirty.' However, this thought derives from the Enemy. For he who goes from the greater to the lesser is mocked by the Enemy. He who does this should be regarded as a soldier who deserts from battle, and not as a soldier who has enlisted in an inferior army; hence, he is not forgiven but, on the contrary, is punished for having abandoned a superior army.

"We should, then, be constantly progressing from the lesser to the greater; we should 'forget those things which are behind,' as the Apostle enjoins, 'reaching forth unto those things which are before' (Philippians 3:13), and, in accordance with our promise, display the utmost prudence. Women who live in the world are of the opinion that they

ought to live prudently; nevertheless, foolishness coexists with the prudence of worldly people, because these women sin with all of their other senses. They cast shameless glances and laugh with impudence; but as for us, since we have left these things behind, let us ascend higher, to the virtues, and let us remove every unprofitable imagining from our eyes; for Holy Scripture says: 'Let thine eyes look rightly' (Proverbs 4:25). At the same time, we should impede our tongue from committing its own particular sins, because it is not proper for the organ that chants hymns to utter shameful words.

"We will be able to observe all of these things, if we do not depart from the convent frequently; for, even if we do not will it, thieves enter into our souls from the senses. How is it possible for a house not to be blackened by smoke that enters from outside, when the doors are open?

"We must, therefore, of necessity avoid going to the marketplace. For, if we think it grievous and inappropriate to see our parents and siblings naked, how much more will it be harmful for us to see in the squares those who have shamelessly stripped themselves, or to hear shameful words? And even when we enclose ourselves in our dwellings, not even then should we be carefree, but, as Scripture says, we should exercise unceasing vigilance (I Thessalonians 5:17). For, the more we take steps to preserve our chastity, the more we struggle with provocative thoughts. That is to say, the more progress athletes make, the stronger are the adversaries against whom they contend.

"See, therefore, how far you have departed from chastity, and you will not be indifferent about present realities. Have you, for example, overcome material and carnal fornication? The Enemy will harass you (with spiritual fornication) through the senses. When you protect yourself from this, he will then nestle in your mind and will stir up unseen warfare against you. That is, he will present to ascetics handsome faces and former conversations which they had forgotten.

"We should, therefore, give no assent whatsoever to these phantasms, for Holy Scripture says: 'If the spirit of the ruler (the Devil) rise against thee, leave not thy place' (Ecclesiastes 10:4); that is, do not make concessions by accepting the thoughts that he arouses. Assent to such figments of the imagination is the same as committing fornication in the world; for 'mighty men,' says Holy Scripture, 'shall be mightily tormented' (Wisdom 6:6). Great, therefore, is the struggle against the demon of fornication, for this is the principal evil that the Enemy has at his disposal in bringing the soul to perdition. This is what the Blessed Job had in mind when he said about the Devil: 'He has his force in the

navel of his belly' (Job 40:16).

"The Devil stimulates Christ-loving people to fornication with many and varied machinations. Often, in his malevolence, he has transformed even sisterly love into his own brand of evil. That is, he has tripped up virgins, who have rejected marriage and every worldly illusion, through sisterly relationships, and by means of pious conversation he has wounded and deceived monks, who have shunned every kind of sexual immorality. For the Enemy makes it his business to cloak himself in alien forms, and thereby he secretly accomplishes his own ends. He puts forth a grain of wheat and places a snare beneath it.

"I think that the Lord is speaking about the Devil when He says that '[false prophets] come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves' (St. Matthew 7:15). Let us, therefore, become 'wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' (St. Matthew 10:16). Let us also employ artful reasoning in order to combat the Devil's snares, lest we be deluded by his wiles, since like is swiftly recognized by like; but let us display the guilelessness of the dove by the purity of our conduct.

"It is necessary, then, that we be ever vigilant and that, realizing well how fearful is the Enemy that wars against us, we beware of his various schemes; for, as I have said, he fights against us with outer temptations and assaults us with inward thoughts, and much more so with the latter.

"We have need, therefore, if we are to be victorious in this war, of arduous asceticism and unceasing prayer; these weapons are proven safeguards against any harmful thought in general. But against this pernicious and destructive warfare we should also use certain specific techniques and thus counter it with opposing thoughts. If our mind is presented with the image of a beautiful face, let it destroy that apparition by reasoning: let it put out the eyes, remove the flesh from the cheeks, cut off the lips, and see henceforth an ugly agglomeration of bare bones; and then let it reflect on that for which it had a longing. Let your thoughts even represent the entire body of the beloved as being full of filthy, rotting wounds and as decomposing into foul-smelling, putrid blood, like the bodies of the dead. Let each of us even see herself, with the eyes of her soul, as a corpse.

"In this way, the mind will be filled with revulsion, will extinguish the longing for the object of its carnal desire, and will be able to restrain itself from vain wandering. It will reflect on the fact that what it loved was nothing other than blood mingled with phlegm, which offers a haven for worms. After this, the mind will free itself from voluptuous-

ness, and one will easily be able, with God's help, to master the pleasures of the flesh."

D. From St. Ephraim

Brother, all of the ancients offered calves, rams, and lambs to God in sacrifice. We, however, have offered our bodies to Him by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us never pollute or besmirch them with things that are forbidden, lest we be delivered to death as sacrilegious; rather, let us preserve our bodies holy and intact. Constant remembrance of God, the rays of which illumine the heart, is sufficient to abide in holiness for those of us who have pure minds. But those who still have weaknesses, aside from this activity of the mind, have need of certain examples in order to attain to such a virtue.

Let us take as an example, therefore, men who live in the world and fight valiantly in wars. They are portrayed on walls and plaques and all of their feats in war are recounted in great detail. In these depictions, their foes are presented as fleeing, while they are presented as pursuing them, smiting them, wounding them, and mowing them down like ears of corn. Their enemies are depicted as dropping pitifully dead and as expiring ignominiously. Many artists also portray the exploits and martyrdom of the Saints in Churches, in order that those who are slow of heart might be reminded that such people contended against their enemies and excelled therein—that they, too, might thus desire to emulate the Saints.

Since our lives are going to be recounted in detail and set forth on a high place, so that they might be seen, on the Day of Judgment, by all things in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth, let us be zealous to acquire virtue, lest anything about us that is shameful and worthy of condemnation be portrayed in that scenario; for "there is nothing hid, that shall not be known" (St. Matthew 10:26).

It is most shameful for an actual person to be seen in a picture engaging in indecent relations with a woman, and especially if he is a monk. If, on the other hand, he is having indecent relations with a man, in accordance with the verse, "men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:27), who will be able to look at such a picture? The mere sight of this is truly repulsive and abominable. If, then, we do not want the whole of creation to see us in such disgrace and depravity, let us always keep this in mind, whenever we are beset by shameful thoughts; we will then recover without fail from our torpor and, feeling

embarrassment (over these thoughts of ours), will overcome the passion with the aid of Divine Grace.

In this way, then, should we protect our bodies from sin and avoid becoming liars before the Creator; for we have offered ourselves as a gift to the Lord and we no longer have any power over our bodies. That is to say, whether we are in affliction or undergoing warfare, we cannot withdraw this gift or use it as we wish, just as someone who has made a vow to God and brings some gift and dedicates it, through the Priest, to the Church no longer has the power, from that moment, to take away what he has offered, even if he regrets having done so. If one is caught attempting secretly to remove the gift which he has dedicated, he will not be acquitted of the charge by pleading that he was removing his own property, but will be punished for sacrilege. In just the same way, those who have dedicated themselves to God no longer have any power over their bodies.

But if, in spite of all this, we are still bothered by carnal desire, let us stoop down and look at a grave, and let us behold the mysteries of our nature: a skeleton, a head stripped of flesh, and the remaining bones. After we see these things, let us imagine seeing ourselves in them, and then let us reflect on where the beauty of the flower of the present life, the fair complexion of the face, and whatever else was beautiful, have gone. The flame of carnality will be quenched through this reflection.

We can fight against this passion and overcome it by other thoughts, with God's help. The Enemy, who constantly harasses a brother by exciting carnal desire, suggests to him such thoughts as these: "How long will you put up with the toil and aggravation of passion? Satisfy your desire just once, so that you may no longer undergo warfare, and repent afterwards. It is insignificant; it lasts for a moment, and then it passes. God, since He is compassionate and loves mankind, will accept you back when you repent." Let the brother then refute him with the following response: "O Enemy of our race and opponent of our salvation, you put in my mind the question, 'How long will I put up with the toil?' I reply to you: 'Until the Lord beholds my lowliness and my toil, and forgives all my sins (Psalm 24:18) and frees me, like the widow (St. Luke 18:3) from my adversary.' Are you not aware, O Devil, that if a wild animal becomes accustomed to eating people, he will become wilder as a result of this habit?** How, then, can you suggest to me the thought that if I carry out my desire just once, I will no longer be bothered by it? And who will promise to me that, if I destroy my body, I will find time for repentance and will not be dragged off into Hell with the

workers of iniquity? For, our life on earth is a shadow. And what is there that cannot happen in a single moment? What if I take a knife and stab myself?

"This is precisely why I should not listen to you: lest I lose eternal riches and all that I have gathered over so many years, laboriously performing deeds of virtue, only to dissipate them in a single moment and become your prisoner. And yet, you say that this is insignificant? Learn, malevolent Enemy of our life, what honor is reserved for those who, by their piety, conquer this passion, which you say is trivial, and what punishment, conversely, has been prepared for those who are overcome by it. Is not the chaste Joseph praised by all generations, and is he not glorified in Heaven and on earth, because he conquered this passion, whereas the Egyptian woman is derided for her shameful act, which is proclaimed throughout the world? Is not the Blessed Susanna lauded by everyone to this day, and will she not be lauded unto the ages, because she did not give way to this desire, but preserved her chastity and scorned death, whereas the elders and judges who governed the people, because they were overcome by this passion, were stoned to death and left behind an evil reputation for succeeding generations?***

"Flee from us, you worker of iniquity and enemy of our souls. May the Lord God, Who bestowed His Holy Spirit on mankind, punish you and foil your machinations and snares, for you lie in wait like a lion, in order to gulp down my soul. For what you present as sweet is bitter; your smooth way is a pit which leads to perdition; and your gifts are replete with corruption and death.

"Do you suggest to me the thought of rejecting the great Grace which I received from my Lord and of grieving the Holy Spirit, with Whom I was sealed on the day of my redemption, and of making the members of Christ the members of a harlot (I Corinthians 6:15)? Are you urging me to forfeit the holiness 'without which no man shall see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14) and to descend from the unending joy and glory of my Lord and inherit, along with you, the unquenchable fire, the unsleeping worm, and the other punishments which God has prepared for you and your minions (St. Matthew 25:41)? Is this what you are recommending me to do and to undertake for the briefest interval of time? And are you telling me that this is a trivial matter?

"I am well aware that if I listen to you, you will run to proclaim my perdition, as a piece of good news, to Satan, your father, and that you will rejoice with him over my fall; but I shall be ashamed before my Heavenly Father. You will not convince me, O Devil, for it is better for

me that you should harass me like a dog than that you should laugh at my expense on account of my misfortune. For, 'the Lord is my firm support, and my refuge...and helper of my salvation. ...The Lord is the defender of my life...and in Him will hope...' and be saved from thy snares (Psalm 17:3; 88:27; 26:1:17:3)."

In addition to this, beloved, bring to mind also the fear of Gehenna and the bitterness of Hell, and in this way, the fire of fornication that burns within you will be dampened by your fear of that fire.

If you wish, I will give you a brief depiction of punishment in Gehenna, so that you may understand from this very feeble account how boundless and unbearable that suffering will be. Did you ever happen to enter a bathhouse and see there how eagerly men who have been overcome from the high temperature of the hot pool run to refresh themselves in the pool with cool water? But in the flame which is going to receive sinners, there are neither any pools with cool water nearby nor an exit, nor light, nor refreshing air; nor, if one cries out with a loud voice because of the flame, will there be anyone to help or comfort him. For Holy Scripture says: "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy" (St. James 2:13).

Have you not noticed how much the fire that burns beneath a bathhouse overcomes even one who merely approaches it? There, in Hell, instead of logs, it is the ungodly who are burnt by the Divine fire, and their sins increase the intensity of the flames and make their punishment unbearable. As Holy Scripture says: "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil and sinneth" (Romans 2:8-9).

Think such thoughts as these, brother, and the desire for pleasure will be dispelled from your mind, as wax is dissolved by fire. Guard your eyes and turn them away from looking at vanities. For the eye that allows its gaze to linger frivolously is a traitor. Now, the mind does battle with the other senses only to the extent that the occasion which provokes it is present; but when the occasion disappears or something contrary happens to us, then the warfare which the occasion provoked departs from our minds and is expelled along with its cause. However, the warfare which is provoked by the eyes continues to be terrible both when the occasion is present and when it is absent; indeed, the occasion afflicts the soul more when it is absent than when it is present, because concupiscence is thereby aroused.

Let me explain what I mean: One hears sweet-sounding music, which passes away, and afterwards he hears the sound of mourning and lamentation; the sweet-sounding music is dispelled by the lamentation.

Likewise, one tastes honey and, immediately thereafter, something bitter; the sweetness of the honey is counteracted by the bitterness. The same thing happens with the sense of smell. One smells some fragrance and then some stench; one's delight in the fragrance is immediately dispelled by his disgust at the stench. Something similar happens with the sense of touch. One touches cold water and then hot water, and the heat of the hot water neutralizes the previous coldness.

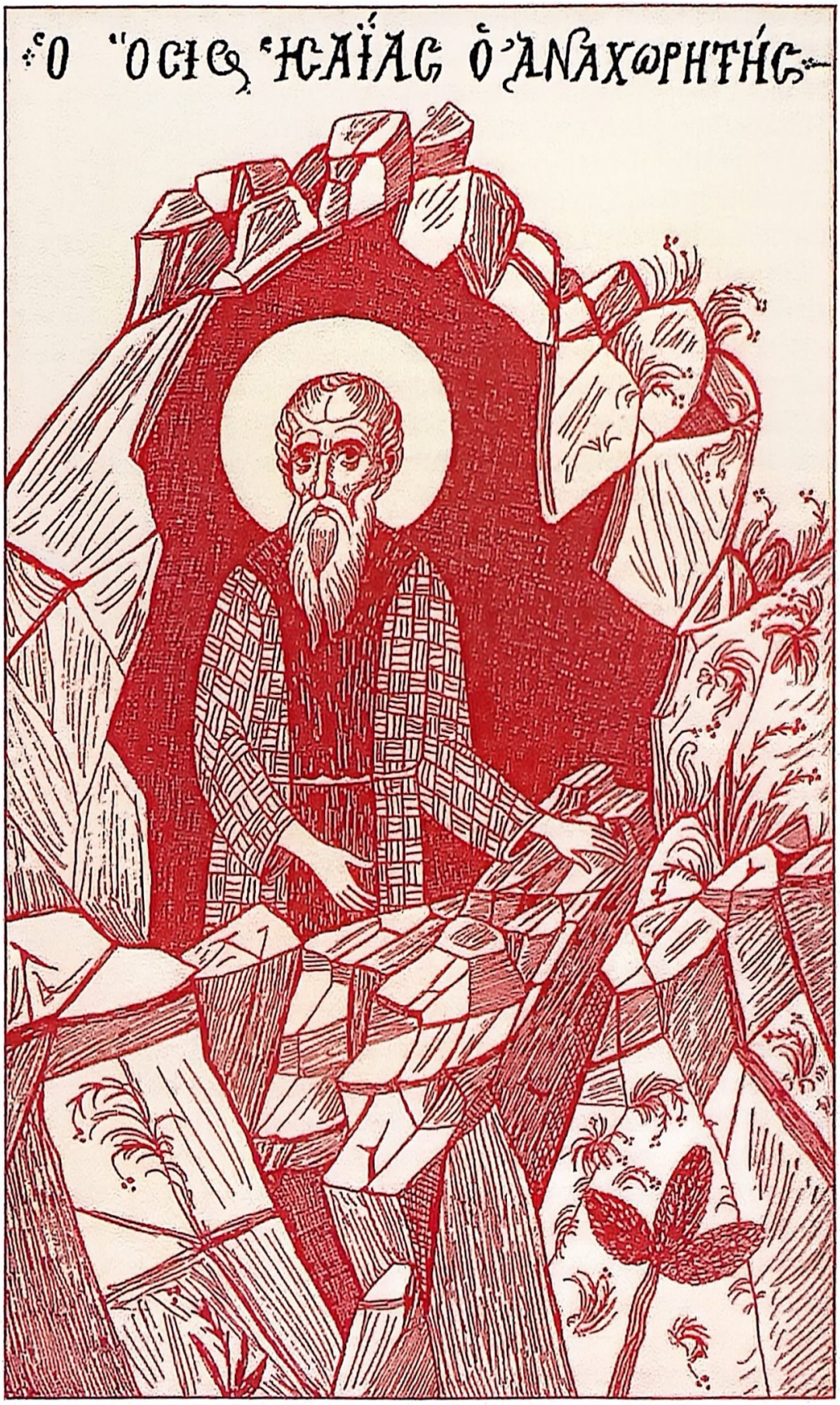
The warfare which is provoked by a frivolous roving of the eyes, both when the object of sight is present and when it is absent, consumes the mind with concupiscence. And not only this, but concupiscence also deceives the heart with shameful dreams; for the demons, after they have found an opening into our thoughts and have entered, put temptation before the mind, occupy the mind therewith, and entice it into voluptuous reveries.

For this reason, Holy Scripture says: "The wandering of concupiscence doth undermine the simple mind" (Wisdom 4:12). That is, when the eyes are conquered, this is the beginning of sin, into which the mind will unfailingly be plunged if it does not come to its senses quickly, as the Lord assures us: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (St. Matthew 5:28). We uproot this adultery by directing our gaze constantly downwards and our soul constantly upwards. We are assisted in this by abstinence (fasting); for he who masters his belly, it is said, has also mastered his gaze. Avoid shameful words and you will also avoid filthy thoughts.

E. From Isaiah the Anchorite

If you find yourself in a city or a village, let your eyes look downwards, lest you stir up warfare within yourself when you are alone in your cell. If you stop somewhere to drink water or to sit down for a serious need, do not slacken your attention, but remember that God is watching you. When you are going to sleep, gird yourself with your belt. Get into the habit of not putting your hands near your skin, because the body has many passions which the heart fulfills. Never consent to sleep with anyone on a rush mat, when you are young, except with your brother or your Abba, and this with fear and not heedlessly.

Do not be careless with your eyes when you are getting dressed, and do not wear fine clothing when you are still young, but only when you reach maturity; for this is therapeutic for you. Do not inhabit a place in



St. Isaiah the Anchorite

which you have sinned before God. Guard your thoughts from becoming captivated with sins that you have committed, lest those sins be renewed in you. Keep your eyes and your heart from looking at evil things. He who looks pleasurably at someone else commits adultery. If physical beauty seduces your heart, remember its stench and you will find rest. If the delight afforded by women is gratifying to you, remember those who have already died, and you will have peace of soul.

Maintain strict vigilance over yourself, so that, just as you abstain from fornication, you will also abstain from the desires of the eyes, the ears, the tongue, and touch, in order that you may always keep your eyes focused on yourself and your handiwork. Do not look closely at a man, unless you perceive that there is a serious need. Do not pay any attention to a good-looking man or woman, except out of necessity. Do not allow your ears to hear unprofitable conversations, and let your mouth be closed—let it say nothing at all, unless it is necessary.

F. From Abba Cassian

The other passions have the focus of their warfare only in the soul; but the warfare of fornication has both spiritual and physical aspects. For this reason, we must undertake a twofold struggle against it. That is to say, bodily fasting is not sufficient for the acquisition of perfect chastity and true purity, if it is not accompanied by contrition of heart, fervent prayer to God, regular study of Holy Scripture, and labor and handiwork, which are able to restrain the disorderly impulses of the soul and divert it from carnal fantasies. However, what contributes more than anything else to victory is humility of soul, without which one can overcome neither fornication nor the other passions.

We must, first, guard our hearts with all diligence from unclean thoughts. For "out of the heart," as the Lord says, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications," and the rest (St. Matthew 15:19). Fasting, that is, has been appointed for us, not only for physical hardship, but also for mental vigilance, lest the mind be made dizzy by a multitude of foods and thus become incapable of watching over its thoughts.

We should, therefore, not be concerned only about bodily fasting, but also about attending to our thoughts and spiritual meditation, without which it is impossible for us to ascend to the height of true purity.

Let us be zealous to "cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter," as the Lord says, "that the outside of them may be clean also" (St. Matthew 23:26).**** For, the Physician of souls, knowing that the

disease is hidden in the depths of the soul, located the remedy in the place in which He knew that the cause of the disease existed; for this reason, He said: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (St. Matthew 5:28). He spoke thus, not so much to correct the inquisitive and whorish eyes, as to protect the soul which is in us and which misuses the eyes that God gave us for a good purpose. For this reason, the wise proverb does not say, "Keep thine eyes with the utmost care," but "Keep thy heart with the utmost care" (Proverbs 4:23); that is, it is to the heart that He entrusted the rôle of a physician charged with keeping strict watch, because it uses the eyes as it wills.

Consequently, let this be the firstfruits of our cleansing; namely, if the recollection of a woman, which has been provoked by the knavery of the Devil, should happen to come into our mind—whether of our mother, or of our sister, or of any other pious women—we should immediately expel it from our heart. We should not linger long on this recollection, lest the wicked deceiver of our souls cause our mind to fall by way of these persons and pitch it headlong into shameful and harmful thoughts.

In the commandment which He gave to the first-formed man, God instructed us to beware the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:16); that is, those occasions which give rise to evil thoughts, whereby the Devil attempts to enter our souls. When we accept the head, which is the suggestion of a thought, then we will accept the rest of the serpent's body, that is, the assent to pleasure. After this, our mind will succumb to iniquitous deeds. It behooves us, as Scripture says, to slay "in the morning all the sinners of the land" (Psalm 100:8); namely, to discern sinful thoughts with the light of knowledge and to extirpate them from the land (which is our heart, according to the Lord's teaching), when evil thoughts, which Holy Scripture calls the children of Babylon (Psalm 136:8-9), are still in their infancy. For if evil thoughts reach manhood, through our consent, they cannot be overcome without great groaning and toil.

We should also be aware that, in this warfare, great assistance is afforded to the struggler by vigilance; for, just as purity and great attentiveness by day make for holiness at night, so also Godly vigilance by night paves the way for purity of soul by day.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother who was bothered by thoughts of fornication asked

Abba Cyril of Alexandria:***** "What am I to do, Father?"

The Elder replied to him: "If you do not have thoughts about this, then you are engaged in it; that is, if you are not actively resisting such thoughts, it is evident that you are putting them into practice and are no longer bothered by them. For, in what way will he who carries them out be bothered by what his thoughts tell him to do?"

The Elder then asked the brother: "Are you perhaps in the habit of conversing with women?"

"No," answered the brother, "my thoughts are from old and new images of women; that is, memories which bother me and fantasies which the thoughts create."

The Elder said to him: "Do not be afraid of the dead, but flee from the living and apply yourself more to prayer."

By the dead, the Elder meant old memories, and by the living, conversations with various people.

2. Abba Anoub asked Abba Poimen about the unclean thoughts which a man's heart engenders, and Abba Poimen replied to him: "'Shall the axe glorify itself without him that heweth with it?' (Isaiah 10:15). So it is with you: do not act on your thoughts and they will be ineffectual."

3. The same Elder said: "A man must struggle against two thoughts: namely, fornication and slander. He should not slander at all, or let his heart be occupied with evil thoughts, since—if he cares to examine such thoughts in detail—he derives no benefit but suffers harm from them. If he prescinds from these thoughts, he will have rest. One practices such detachment by taking refuge in God and by banishing evil thoughts from his mind."

4. A brother asked one of the Fathers: "What am I to do, since my mind is forever taken up with fornication and does not allow me even an hour's respite, and my soul is afflicted?"

The Elder replied to him: "When the demons sow thoughts in you, do not converse with them. It is characteristic of our enemies always to suggest such thoughts to our minds, and they are not remiss in so doing. It is up to you whether you accept or reject evil thoughts. Have you read what the Madianites did?• How they adorned their daughters and had them stand opposite the Israelites? The Madianites did not put any pressure on them, but any Israelites who so desired fell into sin with their

daughters, while others, out of anger, threatened them and even had recourse to murder. So it happens in the case of thoughts: when they begin to speak (to your soul), do not answer them, but get up, pray, and make a prostration, saying, 'O Son of God, have mercy on me and help me in my weakness'; and you will quickly see how your thoughts melt like wax and disappear."

5. One of the Fathers said: "The passion of fornication has many forms; for the Apostle says: 'Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints' (Ephesians 5:3). Fornication is bodily sin, while uncleanness consists in touching of the members of one's body. Laughter and brazenness and, oftentimes, conversation motivated by piety or for the purpose of correction, having stirred up this passion within us, gratify our concupiscence. Sometimes the passion of fornication is aroused in us by the scent of a garment belonging to one whom we love, to say nothing of touching that person or conversing with the person. A monk, therefore, must exercise vigilance hour by hour, lest he become drowsy and slip in the ways that I have mentioned; if he does slip, he not only increases his passion and makes it difficult to overcome, but also suffers grave damage and harm."

6. Another of the Fathers said the following about thoughts of fornication which are generated in the heart, but not fulfilled in practice: "They are like a person perusing a vineyard who, desiring with all of his heart to eat grapes, nevertheless does not enter it, out of the fear of being apprehended as a thief and put to death, but instead walks around the fence, surveying the vineyard and looking at it from every angle. Now, if he is arrested while doing this, he is not put to death, because he has neither trespassed nor put any of the grapes into his mouth. Yet, he is still punished, since, impelled by his desire, he has been caught in the act of surveillance. So also, he who desires to commit a sin, but does not carry it out, does not suffer death, but is nonetheless punished."

7. A brother told an Elder: "I am beset by the warfare of fornication." The Elder responded to him: "If carnal pleasure is a good thing, why did you reject it and renounce the world? And if it is something vile, why do you seek after it?"

8. A brother was accompanying someone and was overcome by

thoughts of fornication. He immediately went and confessed it to the Fathers, saying: "What am I to do? My heart is not at peace, because I went along with the Enemy's warfare. It is as if I had committed the sin."

The Fathers replied to him: "You did not consummate the sin; the Enemy came to entice you into sin, but God protected you."

But the brother, downcast by grief, was not convinced by what he heard. The Fathers then related the following story to him: "Two brothers were sent from a *cœnobion* to a village, and they journeyed together. One of them was tempted five times by a demon to sin, but he got up each time and prayed; in this way, he was not overcome by the thoughts, though he was still severely beset.

"When the brothers returned to their spiritual Father, the face of the brother in question wore an expression of anxiety. When asked by his spiritual Father the reason for his agitation, he made a prostration and said: 'Father, pray for me, for I have fallen [by way of his thoughts—*Trans.*] to fornication.' And he recounted how he had been warred upon by his thoughts. In the meantime, the Elder, being clairvoyant, saw five crowns above the head of the embattled brother, and thus said to him: 'Have courage, my child, for you have not been conquered but, rather, you have been victorious, because you did not commit the sin.'"

When they had finished, the Elders addressed themselves to the afflicted brother, saying: "Henceforth, brother, take courage and do not be upset, for you did not commit the sin. It is, assuredly, a mighty struggle when a man, although he is given the opportunity to sin, restrains himself. He receives a reward from such a struggle, because there is no other warfare stronger and harsher than that of the flesh, and for this reason one can only overcome it with difficulty and great labor. What is your opinion of the Blessed Joseph? Did he achieve his well-known feat without toil? No! He achieved it with great toil and struggle, and as if he were in a theater where God Himself and the hosts of Saints and Angels were watching the athlete's contest from on high.

"The Devil warred against him with all of his wicked legions in order to kindle that man's desire and to make the woman all the wilder. When the struggler was victorious, then all the armies of the Angels glorified God with a loud voice. The athlete won an astonishing victory.

"Therefore, it is a good thing, brother, not to commit an evil deed in your imagination; but if you are tempted, struggle and do not be overcome—that is, do not carry out the sin."

9. An Elder said: "If fornication makes war on your body or your heart, seek to discover the source of the warfare against you and correct yourself—whether it be from too much sleep, or from haughtiness, or from thinking that you are better than someone else, or from having condemned someone for sinning—since, without these things, one does not undergo carnal warfare."

10. The same Elder also said: "If you fall into fornication, and the person with whom you sinned is close by where you live, flee from that place, for otherwise you are unrepentant."

11. A brother asked an Elder about bodily passions, that is, about thoughts of fornication. The Elder replied to him: "These thoughts are like those who sang before the image of Nabuchodonosor. If the flute-players and the lyre-players had not played their instruments in order to influence the people, the people would not have worshipped the image.•• So it is with the demons: they sing to the soul about various sinful desires; that is, they stir up the passions in the hope that they might deceive the soul and persuade it to commit actual sins."

H. From St. Ephraim

1. Just as if you had a dog in front of you, speak harshly to the demon of fornication and never be willingly beguiled by this thought. For a fire is kindled by a single spark and evil desires multiply from a single evil memory. Shake off the recollection of thoughts more than you flee the stench of filth.

2. A brother who was undergoing carnal warfare rebuked the demon, saying: "Go back to your darkness, Satan. Can you really be unaware that, although I am unworthy, I bear the members of Christ (*cf.* I Corinthians 6:15)?" The carnal desire immediately ceased, as easily as one extinguishes a lamp with a breath, such that he marvelled within himself and glorified the Lord for this.

3. If the demon of fornication bothers you while you are working, do not hesitate to lift up your hands in prayer. If he continues to assail you more vehemently, then get up and pray on your knees, and the prayer that you offer with faith will war against the demon on your behalf.

* "Lavra" was the name given by the Byzantines to a cluster of monastic cells within

which ascetics lived and struggled on their own. Later on, large and populous monasteries were called "lavras." Many such lavras were founded in the vicinity of hermitages [*asketeria—Trans.*], which saw the struggles of great Holy Fathers and distinguished ascetics such as St. Chariton († 276 A.D.), St. Evthymios († 473 A.D.), St. Savvas († 533 A.D.), and other great Fathers, whose virtue attracted, as a magnet attracts iron, those well-disposed souls who, forsaking the delights and pleasures of the world, went to them in order to struggle, having them as guides and teachers and, also, as living examples for their laborious but heavenward journey to the tabernacles on high. The Lavra of St. Evthymios, which is the subject of the present narrative, was about fifteen kilometers from Jerusalem. St. Evthymios founded two Lavras, one in a valley ten miles from Jerusalem and above the cave in which the Saint lived in asceticism with St. Theoktistos, after their departure from Pharan, and the other in the region in which the Saint dwelled after returning from the wilderness of Ziph; it was about three miles away from the first lavra. The Saint established another monastery in the wilderness of Ziph, in the cave in which David had hidden when he was being pursued by Saul (I Kings 23:14). The Aimilianus who is referred to here pursued the monastic life in the second Lavra of St. Evthymios. (For a fuller account of these matters, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. I, p. 484. The incident involving Aimilianus is cited on p. 492.)

** In fact, many scientists report that different animals, especially lions and tigers, once they have tasted of human flesh, subsequently prefer it to any other kind and, settling near inhabited places, always endeavor to seize people in order to devour them.

*** Regarding Susannah and her detractors, see the endnotes for Hypothesis XXIII, Book I—*Trans.*

**** The author alludes, here, to the Lord's indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees, who attempted to appear righteous, merciful, pious, and good externally, whereas in reality they were unjust, rapacious, adulterers, and hypocrites (St. Matthew 23:13-36). For this reason, the Lord says to them: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and injustice" (St. Matthew 23:25). In a similar way, Abba Cassian advises us, here, not to fast just to appear externally pious, but also to avoid evil thoughts and humble ourselves before God, since even though men may be deceived by external appearances, it is nonetheless impossible for us to deceive God, Who is omniscient.

***** This is a reference to Patriarch Cyril I of Alexandria (375-444 A.D.), who was one of the most important Bishops of the East. He was a nephew of Patriarch Theophilos and after the latter's death, despite the opposition of the Arians [according to Socrates (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book VII, ch. 7), St. Cyril's election was contested by the authorities, whose preferred candidate was a certain Archdeacon Timothy—*Trans.*], he was elected Patriarch of Alexandria. He censured the Novatians and the Jews and later declared unrelenting war against the heretic Nestorios, taking part in the Third Œcumenical Synod in Ephesus, which condemned the Nestorian heresy. He wrote many theological works and is generally considered to be one of the most important Fathers of the Church. [In the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, this narrative is ascribed to Abba Kyros of Alexandria. See also Wilhelm Bousset, *Apophthegmata: Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1969), p. 176—*Editors.*]

• The Madianites (Midianites), in order to lure the Hebrews to destruction, instead of fighting against them, adorned their daughters and enticed many of the Hebrews into carnal sin and into eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. But God punished them severely. [See endnotes for Hypothesis XIV, above—*Trans.*]

•• Nabuchodonosor, the King of Babylon, made a golden image, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, which he set up in the plain of Deïra. He summoned the consuls, the governors, the heads of provinces, and the other rulers of his kingdom to come to the dedication of the image. When they were all gathered together, the herald cried aloud that, as soon as they heard the sound of the trumpet, the pipe, the harp, the sackbut, the psaltery, and all the other musical instruments, they should all fall down and worship the golden image. Indeed, anyone who did not worship the image would immediately be cast into the burning fiery furnace. And in fact, "when the nations heard the sound of the trumpet, and pipe, and harp, sackbut, and psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the nations, tribes, and languages fell down and worshipped the golden image which King Nabuchodonosor had set up" (Daniel 3:7).

Hypothesis XXIX

We must avoid associating with women and all else that arouses desire.

A. From Palladios

A monk named John, who lived on the mountainside of Lyko,* recounted the following to us when we visited him: "Here, in the neighboring desert, there was a monk who lived in strict asceticism, earned his bread by his handiwork, and through his unceasing prayers advanced in the virtues. However, he had confidence—wrongly, of course—in himself and in his virtuous life. So, the Devil asked God for permission to tempt him as he had tempted Job.** One day, towards the afternoon, he caused this monk to see in his imagination a beautiful woman, who was apparently wandering in the desert. This woman—an apparition of the Devil—found the door of the monk's cave open and stepped inside; she fell at his feet and begged him to let her rest beside him, since she had been overtaken by nightfall.

"Out of reckless indiscretion, the monk felt sorry for her, received her into his cave—as he ought not to have done—and asked her to tell him how she had lost her way. She eagerly began to babble and to speak flattering and deceitful words to him. In succession there came intimacy, smiles, laughter, and the touching of his hands, beard, and neck; in all of these ways, she completely captivated the ascetic. Thus, the monk was totally dominated by desire and enticed by shameful thoughts; he now began to think of a suitable moment to consummate the carnal desire to which he had already assented in his mind, and he attempted to have sexual relations with her. He had now become like a dumb beast, driven crazy by his mania to derive enjoyment from a woman.

"She then let out a loud cry and disappeared from his hands as a shadow vanishes. At once, he heard in the air the laughter of many demons, who mocked him for submitting to their deception and cried out loudly: 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; you were raised up to Heaven by arrogance, and now you have been brought down to the abyss.' After this, he kept vigil all night with lamentations and groanings, and in the morning, despairing of his salvation, as he certainly should not have done, he returned to the world.

"This is the trick of the Devil: when he conquers someone, he lures him into rash and sinful acts, so that he may not be able thereafter to raise himself up. From this, my children, we learn that, for us monks, it is not good to associate with women; on the contrary, it brings great harm to us, because from their faces and conversation an indelible memory of them is stamped on our souls." [This advice is, of course, equally applicable to the association of nuns with men, as evidenced by the words of Amma Synkletike (see, for example, Hypothesis XXVIII, Section C, above)—*Trans.*]

B. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

As I was recounting the deeds of great men, Peter, there came into my mind Bishop Andrew of Fundi;*** namely, what the compassion of God wrought in him. For this reason, with all of my strength I advise those who have consecrated their bodies to abstinence not to dare to live with women, lest by their thoughts they experience so great a fall as he did. For the female form stimulates desire, and gradually centers that desire on itself. I will not hesitate to relate this story, because all who live in this city are witnesses to it.

This most pious man lived a virtuous life, and by his abstinence he kept sacred vigilance within his soul over his thoughts. For a long time, he lived with a certain nun; he was not willing either to dismiss her from his episcopal residence or to cease looking after her. With assurance of his and her own chastity, he continued to live with her and, in particular, allowed her to stay with him in his residence. As a result of this cohabitation, the Enemy, who is the author of evil, tried to enter the soul of the Bishop in order to tempt him. The beauty of the nun began to present itself to the eyes of his soul, and when he lay on his bed to sleep, it made him think unbecoming thoughts.

One day, there came a Jew from the region of Campania**** to Rome. Since he was overtaken by nightfall on the way and did not have anywhere to spend the night, he stayed in the temple of Apollo, which was close by. Out of fear of the demons that were there, he made the sign of the Cross, although he did not believe in the Cross, and fell asleep. At midnight, when all was quiet, he awoke from fear of solitude and of his loneliness; and he remained awake.

Suddenly, he raised his eyes and saw a horde of evil spirits who formed a kind of escort to some ruler. Then the leader sat in the chief seat of that place and began to examine the deeds and wiles of the evil

spirits who were there, seeking to learn what evil each of them had accomplished. While the host of demons were reporting to him all of the evil things they had done against men, one of them stepped into their midst and began to recount in detail the temptation that abode in the soul of Bishop Andrew from the comeliness of the nun who lived with him in his episcopal residence—as well as the disturbance of the flesh that he had begun to experience.

As soon as the leader of the demons heard this, he was very thankful and admitted that his gain would be great, if he succeeded in completely luring the soul of the holy man into a deadly sin. In the meantime, the demon who was giving this report added: "Until the day before yesterday, I did not cease to beset him, but I could not entice his mind; however, yesterday evening, I succeeded in having him put his hand passionately on the nun's posterior." Then the wicked Devil and ancient adversary of the human race urged on this demon with flattering words: "Hurry up and finish it, so that alone among the others you may gain the reward of victory through the fall of the Bishop."

When the Jew saw and heard these things, he was frightened and very distressed. The leader of the evil spirits, the arch-demon, ordered them to inquire who that man was who dared to sleep in the temple. When the evil spirits drew near to the Jew and examined him carefully, they marvelled when they ascertained that he had been sealed with the sign of the Cross, and they said: "Alas! A useless vessel, and yet he has been sealed with the Cross." After reporting this to their leader, that whole crowd of evil spirits which had been causing the disturbance vanished.

Then the Jew, who had seen and heard all of this, arose and made haste to meet with the Bishop. After finding him in the Church, he took him aside and tried to find out from him by what temptation he was possessed. But out of shame, the Bishop admitted nothing. The Jew persisted: "Did you not cast your eyes on that handmaid of God with shameful desire?" The Bishop denied this, too. The Jew then said to him: "Why do you deny it? Did you not reach the point of putting your hand passionately on her posterior?"

Then the Bishop felt himself confounded by these words and admitted with great humility what he had previously denied persistently. To console him for the shame he felt as a result of his sin, the Jew related how he had learned of it and what he had heard at that gathering of the evil spirits. As soon as the Bishop heard this and realized his great sin, he repented. He immediately fell to the ground and gave himself

over to fervent repentant prayer. At the same time, he dismissed from his episcopal residence not only that handmaid of God, but also every other woman who had been in his service. Finally, he transformed the idolatrous temple of Apollo into a Christian Church dedicated to St. Andrew.

Thus was he delivered from the carnal temptation, which was completely driven out by the Grace of God, and led the Jew to eternal life. He taught him the mysteries of our Faith and, after cleansing him with Holy Baptism, brought him into the bosom of our Holy Church.

In this way, then, it turned out that the Jew, who hastened to the salvation of someone else, attained his own as well. Thus did Almighty God lead to the good life him who wanted the other (the Bishop) to be maintained therein.

Peter

This event that I have heard about gives rise both to fear and to the hope of salvation.

Gregory

And so it should. Let us always have confidence in the compassion of God and let us fear our own inability. Certainly we learned that this cedar of Paradise was shaken, but also that it was not uprooted, so that we feeble ones may have it as an example. From the shaking of the cedar let us feel fear, and then let us take courage from its steadfastness.

C. From the Same Author

In the region of Campania,***** on Mount Massico, Martin, a very pious man, lived as an ascetic. He remained enclosed for some years in a narrow cave. From the rock of this cave, by Divine command, there issued enough drops of water to satisfy his daily needs. The Enemy, who is the author of evil, out of envy for the Saint's patience, tried to chase him from the cave. After entering into a serpent, his favorite beast, he arranged that it should go into the cave and, when the Saint was praying, that it should spread itself out before him. But the Saint remained completely unperturbed; he put his hand and his foot at the mouth of the serpent, saying: "If you have received permission from God to harm me, I shall not impede you."

This lasted for three continuous years. The Enemy was then overcome by the great patience and power of the Saint. He groaned, and the serpent was flung down the side of the mountain. All of the forests in that place were consumed by the flame that came from the serpent. God allowed Satan to show how much power he had, but in the end he was defeated and fled in shame. Consider how much attention and vigilance that man of God put forth, after living with a serpent for three years without any fear.

Peter

I tremble at merely hearing of it.

Gregory

This very pious man, from the beginning of his enclosure in the cave, determined that he would not see a woman, not because he abhorred women, but because he feared lest he should incur the danger of temptation from the beauty of some of the women that he might see.

When a certain woman heard this, she boldly ascended the mountain and shamelessly entered the Saint's cave. As soon as the Saint saw her coming from some distance, and recognized from her clothing that she was a woman, he began to pray and put his face to the ground, so that he might not see in front of him. He remained praying in this position on the ground, until that shameless woman gave up hope and departed from the portal of his cell. After descending from the mountain, she died that same day, and it became known to all that it was not at all pleasing to God to cause distress to His servant with such shamelessness.

D. From St. Symeon of the *Mandra*

A woman was once seized by a Godly desire to see the great Symeon• with her own eyes and to derive Grace and a blessing from him. In this desire of hers, she was impeded by the wall [*mandra—Tran.*] around his pillar, which prevented women from entering. However, that virtue-loving woman, dominated by the desire of this good love, constantly pondered on the matter.

Once, when some soldiers went to see the Saint, she put on the same garb as they and completely changed her appearance, so that she looked like a soldier. Having disguised herself thus, she escaped every suspi-

cion, and, after mounting a horse, went with the other soldiers on horseback along the same road, as fast as she could.

When they reached the wall of the pillar, the soldiers dismounted from their horses and left them with the woman, as if she were a fellow-soldier of theirs—for it was not yet apparent that she was a woman. She eagerly accepted this charge, since she wanted to attain to the same goal, and to entrust her horse to them, in turn, when they returned from their visit to the Saint. When the soldiers came to the Saint and achieved what they wanted, the Divine Symeon said to them:

"One soldier from among you stayed at the wall; when you return to him, tell him: 'The prayer of your soul has ascended to the ears of the Lord and the Lord God has blessed you, for He knows well the cares and thoughts of our hearts. You are blessed before the Lord, and since the goal of your journey has been accomplished, do not worry about coming up here.'"

After these words of the wondrous Symeon, the soldiers, as they departed from the enclosure, marvelled at the Saint for his prophetic ability and also at the would-be soldier, who had remained behind, for "his" virtue. After leaving the enclosure, they told the "soldier" what they had been instructed to say, and earnestly besought that blessed woman, who looked like a soldier, to reveal to them who "he" was and how great were "his" accomplishments; for, "Never," they said, "would that honey-dripping and sweet mouth of Symeon have made such mention of you, if you did not have some wealth of virtue treasured up in the recesses of your soul."

When she realized that nothing concerning her had escaped the attention of the Saint, she reluctantly revealed everything to the men and said: "For a long time I have been overcome by a strong desire to come to see this Divine man and to experience with my own eyes the Grace of the Spirit that resides in him. But since women were not allowed to enter the enclosure, I thought that I should hide my sex (for I am a woman) and devise a way to see him. But since the Saint knows all secret thoughts and it was not possible to deceive him, I am leaving, and I will not gainsay his command. Besides, I have been counted worthy to receive his blessing, though not in the deceitful way that I had thought; nonetheless I enjoyed the favor that I wanted, namely, to see the Saint."

That noble woman related these things and, after marvelling still more at the Saint, the soldiers returned to their homes.

E. From the Life of St. Martinian

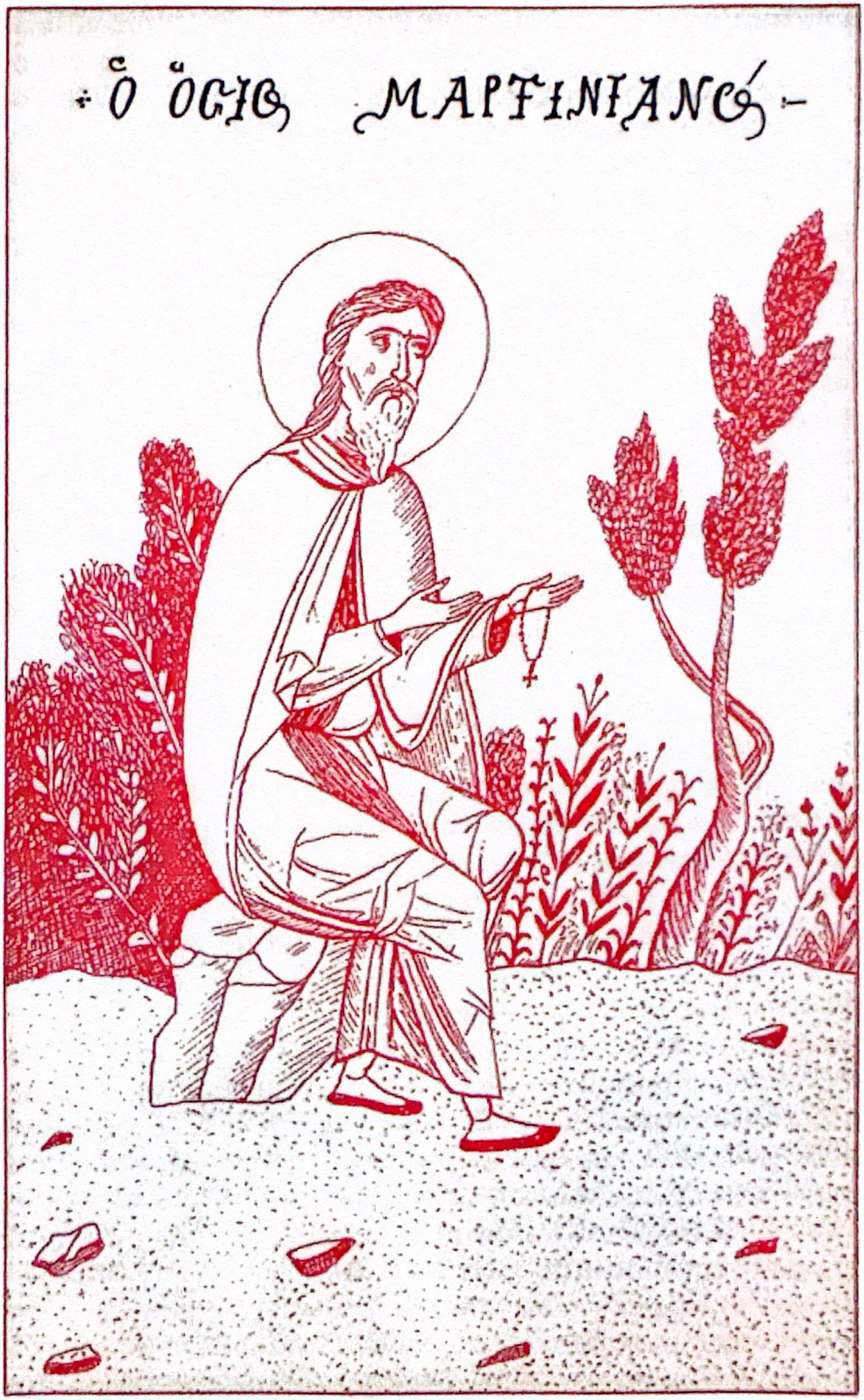
St. Martinian, after many years of living in the desert and achieving all of the virtues, was in great danger of sinning from the activity of the Tempter. One night he consented to give hospitality in his cell to a woman who was supposedly wandering around in the desert, so that she might not be lost. Satan had roused her to tempt the righteous man. His mind was so unsettled by her erotic words that he assented to sin; but at the last moment he recovered from his passion, by the mercy of God, and sternly chastised himself. He lit a fire and stood in it for quite some time, with the result that his feet were terribly burned. Indeed, in this way, by the burning of the fire, he quenched the flame of desire and escaped the danger.

He remained for seven months in his cell, since it was impossible for him to walk, on account of the burns. When the pain from the wounds abated, he came out of his cell and went to the shore, whence a pious ship's captain guided him to a narrow rock, far from land, and he took up his abode there. This captain provided him with the necessary water and bread. But there, too, the Enemy raised a temptation for him that was worse than the first.

Six years had already elapsed since the time when Martinian decided to live on that narrow rock. When he reached the seventh year, the Enemy ambushed a ship that was sailing nearby, full of men and women. Suddenly, by means of a violent wind, which he stirred up, he dashed the ship onto the rocks, and at once the ship shattered, drowning the passengers in the sea. Only a single girl, very young, was able to seize a plank. Floating towards the rock, she was caught by something and began to cry: "Have mercy on me, O servant of God; have pity on me, for I am perishing; give me your hand, hurry, for I am already drowning."

As soon as the blessed one saw that the young girl was within a hair's breadth of being lost and that there was no other source of salvation for her, he smiled and said: "This, too, is a trick of yours, O Evil One. But you will not conquer the power of Christ, in Whom I have confidence." Then he immediately raised his eyes to Heaven and prayed: "O Lord, Lord, to Whom I have entrusted myself, do not let me perish. Although I want to save the girl who is in danger, yet do Thou arrange what is advantageous for her and for my soul."

After this prayer, he stretched out his hand to the young girl and drew her up from the sea. After looking at her face and seeing that it was beautiful, he said: "In truth, fire and grass do not go together. It is not possible for you and me to stay in the same place, since the Evil One



St. Martinian

will destroy us both. Remain here and do not be at all afraid; there is sufficient bread and water until the captain comes, who regularly brings me what I need. When he comes, tell him what happened, and he will take you from here and then return you to your city."

After these words, he made the sign of the Cross over the sea and prayed again: "O my God, Whose command the sea and the winds obey, look upon me and do not allow me to perish, for in Thine awesome Name do I entrust myself to the waters, judging it better for me to perish in this way than to be overcome by bodily passion." Then he turned round to the girl, and after praying for the salvation of her soul, threw himself into the sea; immediately two dolphins dived beneath him and poised the Saint securely on their backs, holding him above the sea.

As soon as the Saint reached and disembarked on land, he gave thanks to God for this wondrous deliverance. Then he pondered what he should do, for his thoughts were at war with each other. "Neither on the mountains nor in the sea," he said to himself, "does the Enemy allow me to live a tranquil life. It is good for me, therefore, to obey Christ, Who bids us, when they chase us from one city, to flee to another [*cf.* St. Matthew 10:23]. After saying this, he fled. "Flee, Martinian," he said, "lest temptation overtake you, flee, humble monk." In this way he passed the remainder of his life, until his final breath, by fleeing from place to place.••

F. From the Life of St. Arsenios

When St. Arsenios the Great was living near Canopus [or Canobus—*Trans.*] (one of the seven mouths of the Nile),••• a senator's wife,•••• who was exceedingly wealthy and pious, came from Rome to meet him and honor him with Godly courtesies. This lady was welcomed and given hospitality by Archbishop Theophilos,••••• whom she besought persistently to persuade the Saint to let her see him.

The Archbishop went and urged him insistently. But he refused to hear of it, although the Archbishop, in order to persuade him, added, apart from other considerations, the labor resulting from the length of his own great journey to see Arsenios. Thus did he attempt to persuade the Saint. When the senator's wife learned of this, she was disappointed; for she was prompted by the reverence and love which she nurtured for the Saint. So, for the sake of these, she overlooked the toil involved, her status, and all else, and took the road that led to him, since she desired

to see him.

When she arrived, she encountered the Saint outside his cell and fell at his feet. Angered by this, he raised her up and, looking carefully at her, said to her: "If you want to see my face, see it." She was overcome by fear and shame and could not so much as look at him. The Saint then added:

"Were you perhaps informed about my deeds from some source, and was it for this reason that you desired to come to me? How did you summon up the courage to undertake such a long journey and come here? Do you not know that you are a woman and that you are not allowed to make such journeys? But apparently it entered your mind to return to Rome and announce to the other women that you 'have seen Arsenios,' and thereby to fill the sea with women, who will not cease to visit us."

The senator's wife replied to him: "With God's help, Father, I will not let even one woman come here; but for your part (I beg of you), do not cease to pray to God for me and remember me."

Arsenios in turn responded: "On the contrary, I will beseech God to extinguish the memory of you from my heart."

On hearing this, she was overcome by great grief and a fever. She made haste to return to Alexandria. When the Bishop learned of this affair, he immediately hastened to visit her. After discovering the cause of her illness, he began to console her kindly and calmly: "You should not grieve so much over what you heard," he told her, "since these words do not spring from hatred but from a pure disposition of (spiritual) self-protection. Besides, you do not know what kinds of wars the Evil One is accustomed to stirring up, through women, against those who resolve to serve God as monks. So, whatever the Elder told you, this is why he said it; for he will not cease to pray constantly, not only for your soul, but also for all Christians."

By these words the lady was comforted in her grief and returned to her native land.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked an Elder: "If a monk goes out on some errand and a woman encounters him on his way, how can he escape the warfare of fornication?"

The Elder answered him: "Perhaps he cannot escape the warfare; but he can escape the deed, if he does not talk at the time of the meeting. For just as flint, when it comes into contact with sulphur, emits fire,

so also the conversation of a woman, when she meets a man, produces sin."

2. Abba Isaiah said: "You monks, do not consent at all to live in your cells with boys; for, four churches in Sketis have become deserted on account of boys."

3. An Elder said: "A boy who converses among his elders is like a man who throws fire into his brother's bosom."

H. From St. Ephraim

Brother, if you converse with a young man who shines with the comeliness of youth, guard your eyes lest desire cloud your mind and you begin to address him with passionate words; thus, you will end up speaking about chastity with your lips, while being licentious in your soul. When such a conversation occurs for you, speak with your eyes lowered, quickly finish your conversation, and resume your silence. For Holy Scripture says: "with much converse she prevailed on him to go astray" (Proverbs 7:21).

[With regard to the foregoing warnings, in the pagan classical world, close relations between adult men and adolescent boys were not considered homosexual *per se*. They were ideally Platonic, and even pagan society frowned on perverse relationships. Nonetheless, violations of normative comportment occurred and were more widely accepted, in some circles, than in post-classical times. The desert Fathers, adhering to the strict standards of Christian morality, warned strongly against any such attachments as being just as dangerous, under demonic influence, as close associations between men and women—*Trans.*]

I. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

It is good and fitting, my brothers, for those of us who have fled from the world and promised God to preserve ourselves chaste and unblemished, to avoid associating with women and, if possible, not even to see them. For a monk, the face of a woman is a poisoned dart, and whatever soul it wounds, it immediately pours its venom into it. The longer it remains, the greater the putrefaction that it produces. Just as a spark, the longer it remains on straw, stirs up a flame, so also the abid-

ing recollection of a woman ignites desire. And just as oil feeds the glitter of a lamp, so also consorting with a woman ignites the fire of pleasure. Let us, then, flee from them, my beloved, because their company is a poison that easily slays the soul.

Let us hear what Holy Scripture tells us about them. The author of Proverbs† says: "Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die" (Ecclesiasticus 25:24). He concludes: "Give the water no passage, neither a wicked woman boldness before thee" (25:25). And again: "My son, let not the desire of beauty overcome thee, neither be thou caught by thine eyes, nor be captivated with her eyelids, for a woman hunteth for the precious souls of men" (Proverbs 6:25-26). "She seduced a man by much conversation, and with the snares of her lips she lured him into sin; once he was deceived, he followed her and was led like an ox to slaughter or a dog to bonds, not knowing that he was running for his life" (Proverbs 7:21-23). "Let not thine heart turn aside to her ways, for she hath wounded and cast down many, and those whom she hath slain are innumerable; her house is the way of Hades, leading down to the chambers of death" (Proverbs 7:25-27). "Remove thy way far from her, and draw not near to the doors of her house, lest strangers be filled with thy strength and thou repent at last" (Proverbs 5:8-11).††

Let us, then, be obedient to the sacred writer and remove ourselves from the company of women, and let us not even look at them. We have also heard about Samson the Nazirite, whom the Spirit of the Lord accompanied, that he was dashed down to the depth of perdition by a woman.††† The Prophet David was overcome by an unguarded glance and committed adultery as well as murder; because of these sins he fell into countless woes.†††† What do we learn from Solomon, who had wisdom greater than the sand, prudence and magnanimity, and great wealth and glory—indeed, far more than all other men? Did he not fall into sin and become an apostate from the Lord on account of a woman?††††† What did the elders and judges of the people experience by looking heedlessly and keeping their eyes on another's beauty? When they had kindled the flame of desire inside themselves intensely, they assailed the Blessed Susannah, but could not overcome her. For this reason they turned into false accusers and ascribed their own crime to the innocent woman. But they were exposed and died a violent death!‡

It is better for us to approach a burning fire than a woman; for if you touch the fire, you will easily withdraw, since you will feel pain. If you

approach a woman and marvel at her words and increase the frequency of your association with her, you will no longer be able to escape, especially if you are young and your mind is weak; but you will run the risk of getting entangled in her nets, like the insects that fall into a spider's web.

He who wishes to preserve his purity should flee from a woman, as one flees from a serpent; for it is not only her company that is a deadly poison for the soul, but also the memory of her. For "wine and women will make the hearts of the wise to fall away" (Ecclesiasticus 19:2). Ecclesiastes‡‡ says: "It is more bitter than death and gall to encounter a woman" (7:27). Because the Lord Who loves souls knows that this passion is soul-destroying and ruinous, He said: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (St. Matthew 5:28).

[Here, again, let us observe that the desert Fathers' view of women is one that contemporary feminists often misunderstand as misogyny. In the ancient world, where prostitution was widespread and constituted an assault on the relative newness of the strict codes of Christian sexual behavior, immoral women represented a particular threat to celibate monks. The language used above must be contrasted to the high esteem in which moral women of Christian character were held by the Church Fathers. Nor do Patristic warnings about the dangers of their association with fallen women ignore the serious weaknesses in men, who—especially in ancient society—were accustomed to sexual activity wholly at odds with Christian standards of morality. Let us keep in mind, as well, that one should also not misunderstand the warnings given to nuns with regard to the dangers of association with men as misandry—*Trans.*]

J. From Abba Isaiah

If you go to a village or a city, let your eyes look down, lest you stir up wars inside yourself when you return to your cell. If a woman says to you, "Peace be to you,"‡‡‡ as you are proceeding on your way, reply to her in your heart, while your eyes look down. Do not look at the clothing of women, if you can avoid it. Do not consent to eat with a woman or to have friendships with young men or, if you are young, to sleep with another on the same mat, except with your brother or your Abba—and this you should do with fear, and not with disregard for the danger.

K. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother who was sent on some errand far away from the *cœnobion* asked the Elder if, in the event that he was invited by some friends of theirs, he would be able to consent to eat with women. The Elder answered that he ought not eat with them at all.

The brother said: "And how am I to know, when someone invites me, whether a woman is going to come and eat with us, in order that I may avoid going?"

The Elder replied: "Ask the one who invites you if there is a woman there; and if he says, 'Yes,' do not accept his invitation. 'Forgive me,' you should say to him, 'I have an obedience not to eat with women.'"

The brother asked again: "If I forget to ask, and I go, and if there is a woman there and she comes to eat with me at the table, what should I do?"

To this the Elder replied: "Then you should take aside the one who invited you and say to him: 'Forgive me, for I forgot to tell you beforehand that I have an obedience not to eat with a woman; allow me to leave.' If he dismisses the woman, stay; otherwise, leave and do not violate the commandment, lest death result from disobedience. Do not be afraid, because you are doing this, not to scandalize others, but to edify them."

L. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios said: "Do not sleep in the cell of a brother who has a bad reputation."

2. The Fathers said that boys, more than women, are the Devil's snare for monks. [See the translator's note on p. 227, above—*Editors.*]

3. Again the Fathers said: "Where there are wine and boys, there is no need for Satan."

4. An Elder said: "My sons, salt comes from water, and if it touches water, it dissolves and disappears; so also, the monk comes from a woman, but if he touches a woman, he is destroyed and lost."

5. A disciple of Abba Sisoes said to him: "My Father, you have grown old; let us go and live near the city from now on."

The Elder replied to him: "Let us go where there is no woman."

His disciple then asked him: "And what place is there, where there is no woman, apart from the desert?"

"Take me to the desert, then," answered the Elder.

This Elder lived the ascetic life for seventy-two years on the mountain of Abba Anthony, and before that—for a long time—in Sketis with Abba Or; and look how even then he was still attentive to himself.

6. A brother asked a certain Elder: "If the need arises for one to meet a woman, how should the encounter take place?"

The Elder replied to him: "This need proceeds from the Devil; in his craftiness, he creates many different pretexts of necessity in order to catch the struggler with one of them and lure him into the abyss of perdition with him; nonetheless, if, as you said, at some time the need presents itself for you to meet a woman, do not let her speak many words to you. And when you speak with her, you should tell her whatever you want in a few words and let her leave quickly. Otherwise, if you remain a long time with her, you will not escape her stench; your mind will be full of this stench, it will be enfeebled, and later on it will fall into sin."

7. A monk went to visit his sister, who was ill in her convent. This nun was very faithful and did not consent to see any man; furthermore, she did not want even her brother to enter, for her sake, among the women. For this reason, she declared to him: "Go, my brother, and pray for me, and I will see you in the Kingdom of Heaven."

8. A monk was walking with his mother, who was an old woman; but when they came to a river, the woman was unable to cross. Her son took his cape‡‡‡‡ and wrapped his hands in it, and after he had carried her in this way, took her to the other side. When they had crossed, she said to him:

"Why did you wrap your hands, my son?"

"Because a woman's body is fire," answered the monk, "and from it comes the desire for other women. This is why I did what I did, so as not to touch your exposed body."

9. Abba Daniel said to a monk who was bothered by the spirit of fornication: "Never reach out your hand to a plate with a woman or eat with her; in this way you will escape the demon of fornication."

10. Abba John the Short said: "He who is satiated with food and converses with a boy has already committed fornication in his mind."

11. Abba Carion said: "Any man who lives with a boy, if he is not strong, falls into sin; if, on the other hand, he is strong, he does not fall into sin, but he does not make any progress."

12. In the regions of Egypt there lived a hermit. He dwelt in a small solitary cell in the desert and was renowned. By the activity of the Devil, a vulgar woman, on learning about him, said to some youths: "What are you willing to give me to entice your hermit into sin?" They agreed to give her something.

So, she went one evening from the city and came outside the hermit's cell, as if she had lost her way. She stood outside the door and knocked on it. As soon as the Elder stepped out and saw her, he was perturbed.

"How did you get here?" he asked her.

"I lost my way," she answered tearfully, "but take pity on me and do not let me be eaten by wild beasts."

The hermit felt sorry for her and brought her into his cell.

At night the Devil began to sow thoughts of licentiousness in his mind. When he recognized the warfare of the Enemy, he said to himself: "The wiles of the Enemy are darkness, whereas a son of God is light." At once he arose and lit his lamp. But since the flame of desire was flaring up inside the ascetic and burning him terribly, he again said to himself: "All who do these things go to Hell; test, then, in this way whether you can endure the everlasting fire," and immediately he put his finger into the flame. He did not remove it until it had completely burned, since, from the excessive burning of his flesh, he did not feel very much pain from the burning of the flame. After his first finger had burned in this way, he next placed his second finger in the fire, and then the third, and so on, until by the morning he had burnt all of the fingers of his hands.

When that wretched woman saw what the Elder was doing, and that he had burned his fingers, she froze from fear and expired. When day dawned, the young men who had made the bet with her came to the hermit and asked him: "Did a woman come here yesterday evening?"

"Yes," he replied to them. "She is inside, asleep."

The young men went into the cell and found her dead. "Abba, did she die?" they asked the ascetic.

In answer, the Elder showed them his hands and said to them: "Look what the daughter of the Devil did to me."

After recounting to them what had happened to him, he said: "However, Scripture says: 'Do not render evil for the evil that they have done to you.' Let us pray, then, that she be resurrected." Having offered fervent prayer, he raised her up and allowed her to depart. She left and thereafter became chaste.

13. About a certain Elder it is said that while he was walking, he found a woman's footprint and covered it up, saying to himself: "Lest a brother should see it and suffer warfare."

14. It was said about a great Elder that he went to a *cœnobion* and saw a boy there, and thus did not want to sleep in that place. The brothers who accompanied him (and who saw it) said to him: "Are you afraid, Abba?" "Actually, I am not afraid," he answered, "but what need is there for futile warfare?"

15. It is related that at one time the Devil went to a *cœnobion* and knocked on the door; a boy heard him and answered. As soon as the Devil saw the boy, he said: "As long as you are here, I am not needed."

16. The Fathers used to say: "It is not God Who brings boys to the desert, but Satan, in order to destroy those who want to live in piety."

17. One time a boat reached a slipway,‡‡‡‡‡ and moored at a mountain where some monks lived. A woman disembarked from the boat and sat down on the hill. A brother came to draw water from the river, saw her, and returned to his Elder, saying to him: "There is a woman sitting on the bank of the river, Abba—something which has never happened here." As soon as the Elder heard this, he took his staff and ran out of his cell, crying: "Help, brothers, for pirates have come here." When they saw him, they all ran with staves to the river.

When the sailors saw this violent onslaught, they understood and snatched the woman onto the boat. They immediately cut the ropes and let the boat be carried along by the current.

18. An Elder said: "The snare of the Devil for a man, especially when he is young, is the body. As Abba Isaiah exhorts us: 'Do not hold a man's hand and do not touch the body of another, except when the other is

very ill, and this with fear. Do not let another's hand touch you or greet you. Never tell anyone to remove a louse from your beard or your head, or from the cloak you are wearing. Throughout your life, never sleep next to anyone else, and do not kiss a boy who is beardless, not even in Church or when he is coming from another place. Do not jest with a small boy, lest your soul be lost, and do not sit beside him or walk with him. And regarding the needs of your stomach, do not sit with anyone at all; for the truly pious man is ashamed even of himself. Many scorn these points as supposedly insignificant; but every evil begins from a small one, and thus it becomes a great evil.'"

M. From St. Ephraim

It is a grave danger for a boy to be in a *cœnobion*, if there is anarchy in the midst of it. But he who nurtures a boy as God wills is blessed. Do you flee from those who wound your body with arrows, my beloved? It is better for you to flee from those who hurl darts at your soul. Do you flee from the serpent that bites your body? It is better for you to flee from women, who bite your soul. He who scrutinizes the beauty of women plants in his soul the desire for them; and he who is frequently found in front of the doors of their houses is like a man who walks on ice, since it is not long before he will slip. My beloved, do you flee from the fire lest it burn your body? You should flee far away from sin, lest it send you into the unquenchable fire and your body should burn eternally with your soul. Just like two combatants, so is the monk who associates with a woman; even if he is attentive and conquers, he will be overcome. Chastity and associating with women are like a lioness and a sheep in the same fold.

* Lyko [Lykopolis—*Trans.*] was a city in the Egyptian Thebaid. St. John, a renowned and wondrous ascetic, lived as a Hesychast on a lofty and inaccessible mountain near that place. (For more information about this Saint, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. II, p. 163.)

** For a fuller account of the righteous Job, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. V, p. 132.

*** Fundi was an ancient city in Italy, situated near Rome and dignified by an episcopal throne.

**** Campania is a province of Central Italy, encompassing a region that stretches from the environs of Rome as far as the Tyrrhenian Sea, into which the River Tiber flows.

***** See the previous note.

• This is a story about our Holy Father Symeon the Stylite.

•• After fleeing from place to place, St. Martinian finally reached Athens, where he reposed on the very day of his arrival and in fact, in the Church of the Entry of the

Theotokos, which is also known as *Kapnikarea*. (Regarding this Saint, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. II, p. 316.)

••• The River Nile is the largest river in Africa and the longest river in the world (at 4,160 miles). It originates from Lake Victoria Nyanza, in Central Africa, and, after a course of 6,500 kilometers, empties out into the Mediterranean Sea. Along the way, it takes in the waters of other large rivers and tributaries. From Cairo and below, the Nile separates into many branches, which form the famous Nile Delta, and finally it flows into the Mediterranean Sea through seven mouths. One of these mouths is "Canopus."

•••• That is, the wife of a Roman senator. Members of the Roman Senate, the highest legislative body of the Roman Empire, were called senators.

••••• Patriarch Theophilos I of Alexandria, who reigned from 385 through 412 A.D. He was the uncle of his successor, Patriarch Cyril I, and a contemporary of St. Arsenios the Great, who lived from 350 through 445 A.D. [See endnotes for Hypothesis XXIV and Hypothesis XXVIII, above—*Trans.*]

† That is, the Old Testament book, the Proverbs of Solomon.

†† This entire paragraph has been taken, as we can see from the verses that it contains, from the Old Testament books, the Proverbs of Solomon and the Wisdom of Sirach [better known in English as Ecclesiasticus—*Trans.*]. Anyone who wishes to receive further instruction from these soul-profiting and salvific teachings can study the cited chapters in their entirety in the aforementioned books of the Old Testament.

[*Editors' note:* The following is an addition from the editor of the sixth edition of the Greek text of *The Evergetinos*: "We quote, here, only a few comments from the *Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Proverbs 5:5-11) by the ever-memorable Father Joel Giannakopoulos, so that readers may better understand the meaning of this paragraph. '...Wantonness, then, hastens the steps of those enslaved to it and conveys them to Hell. Its course does not proceed steadily, because it is like one who walks along the sandy edges of precipices and abysses. Its paths are slippery and hard to discern, since they are characterized by many changes and dissimulations, in contrast to wisdom, which is honorable and truth-loving. This being so, you should not only not enter this woman's house, but you should not even approach its front doors. The only avenue of safety is this: departure! "Draw not near to the doors." A subtle point: her door is the mouth of an abyss. Do not draw near, lest you be stripped, through wantonness, of your health and substance at the hands of exploitative, ruthless, and merciless seductresses—becoming a prey to the instincts of the female sex. "The houses of strangers" are houses of ill repute, which are the opposite of a genuine house. The fruits of one's labors are health and substance. How many estates are squandered by the prodigal.'"]

††† Samson, the son of Manoë, of the tribe of Dan, was the twelfth Judge of Israel. Dedicated by his mother to God because he was born according to Divine dispensation, he became renowned for his great physical strength and fought against the Philistines, who had enslaved Israel for twenty years, and caused them great havoc. On one occasion, however, Samson went to Alsorech and fell into sin with a woman by the name of Dalida (Delilah). The leaders of the Philistines promised great financial remuneration to Dalida, if she succeeded in learning the reason for Samson's great physical strength, so that they might be able to arrest him. Dalida repeatedly asked Samson to reveal his secret, but on three occasions he refused to tell her the truth. Finally, on the fourth occasion, he revealed that his strength was due to his long hair. That night, Dalida cut his hair and Samson, having lost his strength, was arrested by the Philistines, thrown into prison, and blinded. After a year, and on the feast of the Philistines' god, Dagon, Sam-

son was led into the temple to be made a laughing-stock for his enemies. In the meantime, though, the hair of his head had grown, and all of his former physical strength had returned. Samson wept from his grief and begged God to give him strength to pay back the Philistines for blinding him. He then seized two of the pillars of the temple with his two hands and uttered the famous words: "Let my life perish with the Philistines" (Judges 16:30). He immediately shook the two pillars and the entire temple was demolished. Samson was killed, but so also were many Philistines—more than all those that Samson had slain when he was alive (Judges 13-16).

†††† David, the son of Jesse and a descendant of Ruth, was born in Bethlehem, of the tribe of Judah. After becoming king of the Hebrews, he was glorified by the aid of God and increased his power. But, as a man, he fell into sins, one of which was adultery with Bethsabee (Bersabee, or Bathsheba), the wife of his general, Urias. Bethsabee's beauty was a stumbling-block for David, who conceived a desire for her and arranged Urias' death in order to acquire her. That is to say, he sent Urias to General Joab and ordered him to assign Urias to the most dangerous position in the battle, so that he would be killed, which is what happened. From the unlawful relationship between David and Bethsabee a child was born, but it died. God then sent the Prophet Nathan, who rebuked David for his sin, and David, realizing his sin, repented sincerely and sought forgiveness from God, writing the celebrated Psalm 50 to express his repentance; it begins with these verses: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the abundance of Thy tender mercies blot out mine iniquity." After the death of Urias, David took Bethsabee as his lawful wife, and from her he begat Solomon; but in spite of his repentance, he was punished by God and only in this way was he cleansed.

††††† King Solomon, as Scripture says, was very fond of women (III Kings 11:1). He took many women, the majority of whom were from other tribes and ones which God had forbidden to the sons of Israel. These women were successful in seducing Solomon in his old age, and he raised up temples to the gods of the idolaters. For this reason, God punished him, and, after his death, his kingdom was divided into two.

‡ See endnotes for Hypothesis XXIII, Book I—*Trans.*

‡‡ Ecclesiastes is a book of the Old Testament consisting of twelve chapters. According to tradition, this is ascribed to Solomon, and it is believed that he wrote it during his old age. In Hebrew it is called *"Qoheleth."* It deals with the vanity of worldly things and ends with the conclusion that only piety and the keeping of God's commandments constitute the sum of true wisdom.

‡‡‡ "Peace unto thee," a greeting from the heyday of the monastic life, corresponding to today's greetings *"sto Theo," "sten evche tou Theou," "sto kalo,"* etc.

‡‡‡‡ The *"maphorion"* or *"mophorion"* was a kind of garment, a sort of cloak that was thrown over the shoulders and sheltered its wearer.

‡‡‡‡‡ "Diolkos" [or "Slipway"—Trans.] designated primarily a special kind of wooden passageway in Corinth, which linked two seas (the Corinthian Gulf and Saronic Gulf) by way of dry land. Ships were hauled along it from one sea to the other, because the Isthmos had not yet been cut. Since then, every similar passageway that facilitates the haulage of a ship from one sea to another has been called a "slipway." In this case, the text is probably referring to such a wooden passageway, which linked two sections of the River Nile to the Delta near its estuary.

Hypothesis XXX

That a believer must never consent to listen to a flute or a guitar or any other theatrical instrument, but avoid these as ruinous.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

Fortunatus, the most noble of men, once invited the man of God Boniface, Bishop of Ferentino,* who was known for his great miracles, to visit his home and to bless him. The Bishop, certain that Fortunatus made this request piously, readily accepted.

The Bishop, arrived at Fortunatus' home, the table being set for dinner. Just as they were about to say the blessing for the food, there suddenly appeared at the door a beggar with a tambourine, playing cymbals and asking for food. The Bishop was extremely distressed and upset by this. "Alas, alas," he said, "this wretched man is dead. I came here to a joyous table, and before I had even opened my mouth to give thanks to God, he came with his tambourine, playing cymbals." He added, "Give him food and drink, but know that he is dead."

Then this poor man, having taken bread and wine at that house, was struck on the head, as he exited the door, by a huge stone of sorts, which came out of the blue and completely crushed his skull. They picked him up, half-dead, and the next day he expired, as the man of God had foreseen. From this, Peter, you can see how the Saints of God are revealed, since they are the temples of God; thus, if they should happen to be made angry, God, Who dwells in them, works through them and punishes those whom they wish to be punished.

[This passage affords us an opportunity to comment on the strict piety upheld by ancient Christians, and not only by monastics, but by the laity. Their proscriptions against forms of entertainment that are considered acceptable for Christians today—such as refined musical performances and decent theatre—may seem austere and perhaps excessively restrictive. One should see their advice as evidence of the far lower level of Christian life today and, simultaneously, as standards that are not binding and dogmatic in nature, but didactic and exemplary—*Editors.*]

* An ancient city in Italy.

Hypothesis XXXI

That dreams (or nocturnal emissions) occur for various reasons.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

A certain Elder, asked about nocturnal emissions, said that we should not in any way attribute responsibility for such a thing to a sinful energy in ourselves, but simply consider it a thing incited by Satan. By way of example, if, walking down a public thoroughfare and seeing an eating establishment, you pass right in front of it and smell the aroma of meat, have you eaten the meat or not? Of course, you will answer that you have not. It is in the same way that a nocturnal emission does not contaminate you. However, if the Enemy sees that you fear this, he will bother you all the more. Simply take care, when you awake from a dream, not to think about whatever passionate things you saw; that is, do not take the chance of succumbing to your nighttime fantasy by calling it to mind.

B. From Abba Isaiah

If you are beset in the night by a dream in which you seem to have sexual relations, take care not to think during the day about the persons in your nocturnal fantasy, lest you be contaminated by the pleasure thereof and thereby bring down harsh wrath upon yourself; rather, entrust yourself, with your whole heart, to God, and He will aid you, since He has compassion on a man when he falls ill.

C. From St. Maximos

Many say that the demons touch the genital parts during sleep and thus generate feelings of lust; afterwards, when passion has been aroused, it takes, through the memory, the form of a woman. Others, again, say that the demons appear in our minds in the form of women and that they touch the sexual organs, in order to stimulate desire, and it is thus that the fantasies of our dreams are produced. There are also others who say that the passion which is contained within the demon that mani-

fests itself incites in the soul a similar passion and the soul is thus inflamed by evil thoughts and calls to mind the form of a woman. The same occurs with other images of fantasy in dreams. Some say one thing, then, while others say different things about what happens when we dream. Nonetheless, by means of not a single one of the ways that we have spoken about can the demons incite any passion whatsoever, if we have within our souls love and temperance, whether we be awake or are sleeping.

D. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said, "Gradually learn to say about each of the brothers, from your heart, 'He is superior to me in the enactment of the commandments of God.' And again, 'He is more advanced than I.' In this way, you will succeed in reckoning yourself lower than all others, so that the Holy Spirit might dwell within you. If you offend a person, the Grace of God will leave you. You will be given over to fleshly defilement and hardness of heart, and you will have no power to repent."

2. Abba Poimen was asked about defilement, and he replied: "If we cease the practice, that is, the enactment of sin and sedulously watch our thoughts, then we shall find no defilement in ourselves."

3. An Elder said that the hatred of the Devil towards man is great. When he cannot make the elect of God succumb to depraved thoughts while they are awake, he tries to bother them at night with scenes of fantasy in their dreams. The All-Cunning One gains nothing by this, however. For only if a stillborn child (a baby born prematurely—aborted) could inherit what is his father's could one consider the scenes of fantasy in dreams sins for those who are the elect of God.

E. From St. Ephraim

Do not go to sleep angry with someone, so as not to stir up, during the night, the lewd fantasies of dreams.

Hypothesis XXXII

How great is the work of contrition, what the manifold forms of contrition are, and what the different kinds of tears are.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

Peter

Please, most honored Master, tell me what are the various kinds of contrition.

Gregory

Contrition, Peter, manifests itself in many forms of spiritual beauty. For this reason, Jeremiah says, "For these things I weep, mine eye runneth down with water" (Lamentations 1:16). However, there are two essential kinds of contrition. When the soul, thirsting, seeks God, at the outset it feels contrition out of fear, but afterwards out of desire. In the beginning, it is crushed when it recalls its sins and is frightened thereby, lest it be condemned to eternal Hell. After the soul has been greatly upset, this cowardliness subsides and there is born within the soul a certain assurance with regard to forgiveness, as well as a certain courage; and in this, the soul is warmed by a desire for Heavenly joy. And this soul, which shortly before wept from the fear that it might be condemned, begins afterwards to weep bitterly once again, but now because it is so far from the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, the spiritual mind having been cleansed, it clearly beholds before it what the choirs of the Angels are, what they partake of, what the splendor of the blessed spirits is (as well as what their glory is), and what the vision of God Himself is.

The soul thus laments all the more, since it must postpone the enjoyment of the eternal good things which await it. In such a way, this perfect contrition leads the soul from fear to love, as it is so well written in the sacred and true story of Ascha (Achsa), daughter of Chaleb (Caleb).* Now, it is said in the Old Testament that Ascha, seated on an ass, sighed. "What is wrong?" her father asked her, and she replied:

"Bless me with the lands that are to the north, for you have given me dry lands; give to me also lands which are watered by springs." And her father gave her lands that were watered by springs from below and which were watered from above.

Ascha, seated upon an ass, symbolizes the soul which continues to take refuge in the irrational thrills of the flesh; the fact that she sighed and asked of her father land watered by springs means that we should ask from our Creator, with great groaning, the gift of tears.

For many are those who have been made worthy to receive the gift of teaching and the boldness to preach the truth, to comfort the afflicted, to give relief to those in need, and to become zealots of the Faith; but they have not yet received the gift of tears. That is, they possess a stretch of dry land, but they also need a stretch of land that is watered. They truly perform good deeds in their life; they must, however, lament for the evil deeds that they performed previously, either out of fear of the coming Judgment or out of love for the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus will they, too, enter that realm where the great Saints, who are ablaze with love, are to be found.

As I have said, there are two kinds of contrition. The aforementioned story says that Ascha's father gave her a stretch of land that was watered from above and one that was watered from below. A soul which mourns with tears out of its desire for the Kingdom of Heaven receives the stretch of land that is watered from above; while a soul which laments out of fear of eternal punishment receives the stretch of land that is watered from below. Although, during the stages of spiritual progress, the soul is first given the land which is watered from below, that is, it laments from fear of eternal punishment and is subsequently given the land which is watered from above (namely, gladsome contrition arising from nostalgia for the Kingdom of Heaven), nevertheless, the story in question of necessity mentions first the land which is watered from above and secondly the land which is watered from below, because the former is of greater worth than the latter.

B. From St. Ephraim

The beginning of contrition is for one to know himself. Let our contrition not be merely human, or for outward show before men; but let it be as it is willed by God, Who knows the secrets of our hearts, so that we may be blessed by Him. Let us, therefore, wear a cheerful expression when we encounter people, but let us weep and mourn inwardly. For

contrition is a prerequisite for spiritual labor and it guards us; contrition cleanses the soul with tears and renders it pure. Contrition gives birth to chastity, cuts off pleasures at their roots, and enables us to acquire the virtues. Indeed, what is it that I am saying? That contrition is blessed by God and praised by the Angels.

Grant me tears of contrition, I beseech Thee, O Lord, Who alone art good and compassionate, that I may thereby bewail myself and implore Thy compassion. Cleanse me of the filth of sin.

Alas! How shall I endure the Gehenna of fire and the outer darkness? Alas! How shall I endure Hell (Tartaros) and the eternal torments of that place, and the worm that pours out venom and never dies? Alas! How shall I endure the dreadful threatening of the fallen Angels who oversee torments, for they are fearsome and hard-hearted? Who will pour water on my head and fountains of tears into my eyes, so that I may sit and lament night and day and propitiate God, Whom I have angered?

Have you sinned, O my soul, have you sinned? Repent, for our days pass like shadows; a little while, and you will depart from this world. You are going to pass through fearful places; it is not possible, my soul, for you to avoid passing through these places. There will be no one from this world to accompany you or help you: neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor friend, nor any other person. But on your own, O my soul, with your deeds, will you pass before the rulers of darkness. They neither fear kings, nor honor potentates, nor do they respect anyone, be he small or great, with the exception of him who has lived a pious life and been clothed, by virtue of his deeds, with the protection of God. From him they withdraw, because they fear him, and they afford him a thoroughfare with safe conduct. For his virtue will precede him and the glory of God will ward them off.

My Lord, when I reflect on that hour, I fall down before Thy goodness and I beseech Thee, that I may not be delivered to those who wrong me (the demons); let Thine enemies not boast against Thy servant, O good Lord, by grinding their teeth and terrifying my sinful soul. Let them not say: "Have you fallen into our hands? This is the day that we have been awaiting." Do not, O Lord, do not forget Thy compassion. O Lord, do not desire to punish me in accordance with my iniquities, nor turn Thy countenance disdainfully elsewhere, so as to avoid looking at Thy servant.

Chastise me, O Lord, but with compassion, for I am weak; and let not the Enemy vaunt himself to my detriment, but thwart his threaten-

ing, quash his tyranny, and count me worthy to traverse the way that leads to Thee without suffering insults or harassment. Be lenient with me, O good Lord, not on account of my virtues, but out of Thy pity and Thine immeasurable compassion, and save from death a soul that calls upon Thy holy Name.

Be mindful, O Lord, that having sinned and been mortally wounded, I have not had recourse to any other physician, nor have I stretched forth my hands in supplication to any strange god, but only to Thy goodness. For Thou, O Lord, art sovereign over all things, and hast authority over everything that exists. Cleanse me, O Lord, of every sin before the end, and do not reject my entreaty. O good Lord, an unclean mouth, a polluted heart, and a soul tarnished by its sins cry out to Thee.

Hearken unto my unworthiness, O Lord, because Thy goodness is great and inexpressible, and grant me a pure and true repentance, for that which I have is a sham, since at one o'clock I repent and at two o'clock I anger Thee. Make firm my heart in the fear of Thee, O good Lord, and establish my feet upon the rock of sincere repentance. May Thy goodness, O Lord, overcome the evil that is in me, and may the light of Thy Grace overcome the darkness that prevails within me.

O Lord, Who didst open the eyes of the blind, open also the darkened eyes of my heart. O Thou Who by Thy word didst cleanse lepers, cleanse also the sins of my soul. May Thy Grace be within me, O Lord, as a fire to burn up my sins; for Thou alone art the Physician of souls, the Light that is more radiant than all other lights, the joy, the repose, the delight, the true life, and the salvation, abiding unto the ages of ages, and unto Thee belong glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages. Amen.

In particular, I implore you, O beloved elect of God, that you beseech His goodness for me, the sinner, as the Apostles made entreaty for the Canaanite woman. You who are worthy, make entreaty for me who am unworthy; you who are honorable, make entreaty for me who am worthless and useless, so that my own supplication may enter into the presence of God together with your right acceptable supplications and may free me from the tyranny of the Devil. May my name be inscribed in the Book of Life and may I be deemed worthy to worship before the Throne of His Kingdom, for His is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, unto the ages. Amen.

C. From Abba Isaiah

1. Woe is me, woe is me, for I have not yet been delivered from Gehenna. They (the demons) who submerge me in the fire of Hell are reaping the fruits of sin from my flesh, and all the works of the flesh are being stirred up inside my heart. I have not yet thought about where I shall go when I leave this world. I have not yet found the straight path. I have not yet been freed from those activities which are going to hinder my progress through the air, because the evil results of these activities are inside me. I do not have the boldness to address my Judge freely, because I have not yet been told that I do not deserve death and I have not yet ceased to commit wicked deeds, that is, sins.

The evildoer who is shut up in prison does not rejoice. One who is bound with chains cannot do what he wants. One who is confined to the stocks does not instruct someone else.** One who is toiling does not think about rest, and one who is bound by the neck does not eat with any pleasure. He who is condemned does not think about doing any further wicked deeds, but unceasingly weeps with a broken heart, because he has committed sins for which there is no amendment. In all of the punishments and torments to which he is subjected, he says: "Yes, I deserve these." He is forever thinking about what his end will be and carefully examines what kinds of punishments correspond to his sins, and thus, he has no interest in judging anyone. The pain of torments devours his heart.

Alas for him, for contemplation of these torments is a bitter thing. He is unable to give confidence to others to prevent them from being weighed down with torpor. He has no concern whatsoever for food; he is content with the alms of those who take pity on him. When he is reproached, he does not respond with anger towards those who reproach him; laughter has vanished from his lips. He groans and shakes his head in desperation, because he is constantly thinking about the tribunal before which he is due to stand. If he hears people talking, he does not reply, whether they are saying good or bad things—he does not even pay attention to what they say. His eyes run incessantly, like a river, from the pangs that he suffers in his soul. If he is descended from noble parents, he grieves yet more, out of shame, on account of those who are going to see him at the tribunal.

While the tribunal is being prepared for him, he does not take any notice of the crowd, whether they are good or bad people, but both his heart and his body tremble all over. Should there be others who are going to be judged with him, he pays no heed to them, nor does he contemplate, along with them, what he is to do; for when one is being

dragged off to be judged, he takes up the burden of his own sins and his face is darkened. No man says so much as a word on his behalf, out of fear of punishments, and he confesses what he has done and accepts that he will justly and fittingly be punished for the sins that he has committed.

How long will I be drunk without wine and indifferent, when I have this prospect before me? The hardness of my heart has dried up my eyes and the distractions of my mind have made me completely oblivious to that dark hour. Weep with me, therefore, everyone; weep with me, my brethren, you who know me, and beseech God to send me help superior to my own strength that will take hold of me and free me from those who are dragging me off to Gehenna.

My brethren, let us take pains to acquire for ourselves Martha and Mary, who signify for us bodily hardship and contrition of soul, who wept before the Savior, that He might raise Lazarus, namely, the mind, which is bound with the many cords of its own volitions. The Savior shows His mercy and raises him for their sake; thereupon, however, they are obliged to unbind him and free him. When Lazarus is freed, the concern of Mary and Martha becomes evident. For thereafter, Lazarus, without any further cares, sits with Jesus, Martha performing her services with eagerness and joy and Mary bringing in the alabaster vessel of myrrh to anoint the Lord's feet;*** the Lord, that is, accepts her contrition as myrrh. Bodily hardship corrects the negligence that we have hitherto displayed, while contrition of the senses heals the wounds which our enemies have inflicted on our souls.

The works of one who feels sincere contrition are these: to detach his mind, along with his senses, from their immediate environment and not to judge his neighbor; for one who is preoccupied with his own sins avoids judging that which God has created. He takes care not to requite in equal measure one who has wronged him; not to be distressed at anything done without his knowledge by one who lives with him; not to do his own will; not to express an opinion about anyone (whether he is good or bad), since he feels shame at learning that there is someone more vile than he; not to want to learn about matters which do not concern him; not to be aggrieved when others reproach him; not to be distressed if he is overlooked in the customary distribution of life's necessities; not to be upset when he is slandered over something of which he has no knowledge, but to say immediately (about the one who slandered him), "May he be forgiven"; not to accept words of praise, if someone praises him; not to feel sorrow when he is insulted; not to pur-

sue friendship with the high and mighty of this world; not to wish to impose his own opinion on others—even if what he says is correct—and not to be argumentative about anything.

Whoever has these virtues and those that are akin to them shows that he has true contrition and that, through the eyes of his soul, he knows himself and his own weakness, perceives the glory of God, and realizes that he cannot please God as he supposes. For this reason, he is content with his sorrow, weeps over himself, and does not concern himself with man, God's creature, whom *God* is going to judge; therefore, he is careful to preserve intact the spiritual edifice which contrition has fashioned inside him. For, the Godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:10) which consumes his heart is able to possess his senses; and if he continues to resist temptations with sobriety, he can then preserve the sensory faculties of his mind unharmed. And indeed, unless a man comes before the tribunal, hears the sentence against him, and learns what kind of person he really is, he cannot be free from anxiety; nor can he have any trust in himself. As long as the soul remains in the body, it must toil unceasingly.

Blessed are those who do not have confidence in their works—that they are somehow pleasing to the Lord—for they are ashamed to look upon Him. They are always in a state of contrition because they see that they are unable to do the Will of God as He wishes. In this way, they truly find a consolation which cannot be put into words. When the Angels and the Saints of Heaven testify at the celestial tribunal on their behalf, that they escaped from the dominion of the forces of darkness which habitually make war on us from the left, they will hence be commemorated together with the Saints of Heaven. However, as long as a spiritual war is in progress, a man will be in fear and trembling: What will happen today? Will he conquer or be conquered? Or what will happen tomorrow? Will he conquer or be conquered? That is to say, the struggle constricts his heart, whereas dispassion is invincible. For one who is dispassionate has received the prize of victory and now lives in peace and tranquillity, since the three elements that were separated—to wit, the soul, the body, and the spirit—are at peace with each other and have become one.

When these three become one, by the operation of the Holy Spirit—according to the Apostle (Ephesians 4:4)—they can no longer be separated. For, Christ died, he says, and rose, and "dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Romans 6:9). For His death has become salvation for us, because sin has been put to death by death, and His

Resurrection has become eternal life for all who believe in Him.

Do not reckon yourself to overcome death, as long as you are undergoing warfare from your enemies, whether when you are awake or asleep. That is, as long as a besieged man is in the arena of spiritual struggles, he does not become over-confident; and looking at matters objectively, he does not trust in his deeds. Now, the foolish man, though he falls daily, thinks that he is victorious without waging a struggle in the arena. For this reason, when the Lord was sending His Disciples off to preach, He exhorted them: "Salute no man by the way, but salute those in the house; and if the son of peace be there, in the same house remain, and your peace shall rest upon it" (*cf.* St. Luke 10:4-7); for they still needed to be cautious.

2. The same Elder said: "We are subjected to so many hardships and torments from our enemies, because we are not yet aware of our deficiencies and we do not know the meaning of contrition. For if contrition is engendered within us, it discloses our sins to us; and if the enemies of our soul would allow us to become truly aware of our sins, then we would be embarrassed to look even a prostitute in the face, because such women are more upright than we—when all is said and done, they commit sins brazenly, because they do not know God, whereas we, although we believe, consent in our hearts to our sins."

3. Again, the same Elder said: "A man who constantly sees his sins cannot ever enter into intercourse with anyone."

4. The same Elder said: "Woe is me, my wretched soul, for I feel sorrow and unremitting pain in my heart, since the fiery darts of the Enemy have embedded themselves in me, completely blinding my inner man, and the shadow of death has covered me. Woe is me, miserable soul, for I have chosen sorrow instead of joy, and I have loved earth and ashes more than the delight of Paradise and the Kingdom of Heaven. Who will not mourn for me? Who will not bitterly lament, since I have wasted my whole life in vanity?

"Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me, O friends, and be persistent in supplicating my good and forbearing Master Christ on my behalf, that He may deliver me from the evils which I habitually commit, in the hope that, persuaded by your entreaties, He may take pity on me and banish from my mind the dreadful blindness brought on me by the Devil, who hates what is good, and that I may be-

hold what kind of mire it is into which I have fallen—from which I do not even wish to raise myself up, even though I am able to do so. Because the time of my life is now short, I fear, lest the Devil shall have cut off my every hope of salvation.

"There is no pain like my pain, there is no wound like my wound, and there is no sorrow like the sorrow of my heart, 'for mine iniquities are gone over my head' (Psalm 37:5) and 'I am stuck fast in the deep mire, and there is no sure standing' (Psalm 68:3). Alas, my soul, open your eyes and see that the present life is transitory and will soon pass. Consider the future life, which exists eternally, and consider what and how many good things you will be deprived of and, also, what a fearful punishment you will inherit, without any hope of someone to succeed you or console you. Before the sun darkens over your head, draw near and beseech the Giver of immortal light on bended knee, imploring Him to deliver you from that dark and unbearable fire and from such other punishments, for He alone is able to forgive sins and overlook the iniquities of us who are unworthy of His mercy. For His is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, unto the ages. Amen."

D. From Abba Isaac

There are tears that burn and tears that bedew; the former are caused by fear, but the latter by love. Now, the first, namely, those which flow on account of our sins, dry up and burn the body and give rise to pain in the soul—for oftentimes, when these tears come forth, a man cannot restrain himself; whereas the second, which come to someone after he has shed enough of the former kind and thereby washed away his sins, by God's mercy flow naturally and with spiritual pleasure.

When one's soul has tasted Divine Grace, he then sheds tears without feeling pain, and such tears as these strengthen, benefit, and enrich the body and alter the countenance, as Scripture says: "When the heart rejoiceth, the countenance is cheerful; but when it is in sorrow, the countenance is sad" (Proverbs 15:13). If we desire to enjoy the latter, let us cultivate the former (tears of repentance), as far as possible; for, if we do, we shall soon, by God's Grace, receive the latter.

E. From the Same Author

Question

And is it possible to be always in a state of contrition?

Answer

It is possible, because the entire pursuit of a monk in his cell consists of nothing other than lamentation, and his activity is contrition. Contrition is his very name; it reminds him of this and spurs him on to it. He is called "the mournful one," that is, bitter in heart. All of the Saints departed this life with contrition in their souls. Now, if the Saints were always in mourning, how will one who is full of wounds be able to cease lamenting? Your soul, which is of greater worth to you than the whole world, has been deadened by sins and lies dying before you, and yet you do not feel that you need to weep? Consolation for a monk is born from weeping. Indeed, it is not possible for one who mourns constantly to be bothered by the passions. He who has ceased to think of the passions is cleansed and, by virtue of this cleansing, is made worthy of consolation from God, which He promised to grant to those who mourn without ceasing (St. Matthew 5:4).

F. From St. Barsanouphios

A brother asked an Elder: "How is it possible for me to suppress loquacity and control my tongue?" "With contrition," answered the Elder. "And how can I preserve contrition," the brother asked again, "when I associate with people and look after my duties? Furthermore, how can there be contrition in the heart without tears?"

To these questions the Elder replied: "Contrition does not come from tears, but tears come from contrition. If one lives among men, yet cuts off his own will and pays no heed to the faults of others, he acquires contrition. As a result of this, he gathers his thoughts together and, when they are thus collected, they produce Godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:10) in his heart, and this sorrow then engenders tears."

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked an Elder: "How is it possible, Father, for a man to weep?" "Weeping is a habit," the Elder replied, "and he who seeks after it requires much time for training his thoughts, so that his mind may always attend to the sins that he has committed, or contemplate Hell, or keep in constant remembrance the grave and all of his Fathers and how

St. Barsanouphios

they lived in this world and where they are now." The brother said: "Should a monk remember his parents at all, Father, even if they are dead?"***** The Elder responded: "If you see that this recollection brings about compunction in your soul, focus your mind on it; and later on, when tears come, channel them in whatever direction you wish, either into recalling your sins or into some other good recollection.

2. "I know a brother who is a practitioner of virtue. When his heart was hard, he would beat himself many times and would cry from the great pain that he felt; then he would recall Hell and all of his sins."

3. Regarding a certain brother, I learned that, after renouncing the world, he went to live on Mount Nitria.****** His cell was close to the cell of another brother, whom he would hear weeping incessantly every day over his sins. When, after a long time, tears did not come to him, he said to his soul: "Are you not weeping, you wretch, and are you not lamenting? Believe me, if you are reluctant, I will make you weep." He arose, took a whip that had a crop of solid gold, from which there hung a double rope, and beat himself with it so hard that he began to weep from the pain.

The brother who lived with him marvelled at what this brother was doing and besought God to reveal to him whether the latter was doing right in tormenting himself. And, in fact, one night in a dream he saw this brother wearing a crown and standing among the Martyrs; and someone was saying to him, as he was dreaming: "Behold the good struggler, who is tormenting himself for the sake of Christ, how he is crowned together with the Martyrs."

4. Throughout his life, when occupied with his handiwork, Abba Arsenios kept a piece of cloth on his chest, with which he would mop up the tears that constantly ran down from his eyes. When Poimen, who was renowned among monks, saw this, he said: "Blessed are you, O Arsenios, for you will have no need of tears in the next life, since you have mourned for your sins in this world." It is also related that Bishop Theophilos of Alexandria• remembered this and said, when the Abba was dying: "Blessed are you, O Arsenios, for you never ceased to ponder on this hour and you mourned unceasingly."

5. A brother asked Abba Ammonas: "Speak a word to me, that I may be saved." The Elder replied to him: "Make your thoughts like those of

malefactors in jail. They are forever asking passersby: 'Where is the governor, and when is he coming?' And they weep from the expectation of their trial and punishment. So, also, the monk ought always to attend to his soul and say: 'Woe is me. How shall I appear before the dread tribunal of the just Judge? And what defense shall I give to Him?' If you always think along these lines, you can be saved."

6. Abba Longinos said: "Fasting humbles the body and vigil purifies the mind; stillness produces contrition, and contrition baptizes a man and frees him from his sins." Abba Longinos himself experienced great compunction in prayer and psalmody. One day, his disciple asked him: "Abba, is this the rule of spiritual life, that a monk should weep constantly in his prayers?"

The Elder answered: "Yes, my child, this is the rule which God requires from us in this present life. For, from the beginning, God did not create man to mourn but to rejoice, to give thanks to God and to glorify Him with purity and without sin, like the Angels; but ever since we fell into sin, man has been in need of lamentation. All who have fallen into sin are in need of tears. Where there is no sin, there is no need for mourning."

7. Abba Makarios the Egyptian said: "When I was a boy, I used to graze cattle, and (on one occasion) I went with some other boys to steal figs. As we ran, one of the figs fell; I picked it up and ate it. Whenever I recall this deed of mine, I sit down and weep."

8. Abba Moses said: "Have we been overcome physically by some passion? Let us not be negligent, but let us repent and mourn over this, before we are overtaken by the mourning of the future Judgment."

9. The same Elder said: "Sins are forgiven through tears; but when you weep, do not raise the voice of your groaning. Let the left hand, that is, vainglory, not know what your right hand is doing."

10. A brother asked Abba Moses: "What should a man do in the face of some temptation that comes upon him or some thought that is sown in him by the Enemy?" The Elder replied to him: "He should weep before the All-Good God, that He might help him; and if he calls upon God with discernment, he will have peace. For, Holy Scripture says: 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him' (Psalm 144:18)."

11. On one occasion, as he was returning to Egypt, Abba Poimen saw a woman sitting on a tomb and weeping bitterly. He said to himself: "If all of the delights of the world were assembled in front of her, they could not comfort her soul, because she is mourning. So, also, should the monk always have contrition in his soul."

12. Another brother asked the same Elder: "What must I do to be saved?" And the Elder answered him: "When Abraham entered the Promised Land, he purchased a tomb for himself, and by means of this tomb he inherited the land." The brother asked him again: "What is the tomb?" And the Elder said to him: "It is a place of mourning and contrition."

13. Another brother also asked the same Elder: "How can I be saved?" The Elder replied to him: "When God shows His providential care for us, what should we think about in that instance?" "Our sins," answered the brother. "Let us, therefore, go into our cells," the Elder responded, "and let us sit down and recall our sins before the All-Good God, until He has mercy on us."

14. Abba Isaac related the following: "On one occasion I was sitting near Abba Poimen and I saw him fall into ecstasy and lamentation. Since I had boldness before him, I made a prostration to him and implored him, saying: 'Tell me, where were you?' When I pressed him, he replied: 'In my mind, I was beside the Cross of the Savior, where the Holy *Theotokos* Mary stood and wept, and I wished that I could always weep in that way (as did the *Theotokos* for her Crucified Son).'"

15. Abba Paul said: "I am in mire, sinking up to my neck, and I weep in the presence of Jesus, saying: 'Have mercy on me.'"

16. Abba Silouan mourned unceasingly and never wanted to go out of his cell. If he was ever obliged to leave, in order to take care of some need, he would cover his face with his veil, and to any who asked why he did this he would reply: "Why should I look at this transitory light, from which I derive no benefit?"

17. Abba Theodore recounted to us that in the Cells there dwelt a brother who had acquired the gift of compunction. It happened one day that his eyes were inundated with tears from the pain that he felt in his

heart. When the brother saw this, he said to himself: "Truly, this is a sign that the day of my death is approaching." And, as he pondered on this, his tears multiplied even more. The more he saw his tears multiplying, the more he believed in his thought, and he said: "The time has indeed come." And, as a result of this thought, tears came to him more and more every day.

We asked Abba Theodore about tears—why it is that they sometimes come by themselves, while at other times one cannot induce them even with effort? The Elder answered: "Tears are like rain, and man is like a farmer; when they come, he who cultivates the earth of his heart must strive not to lose any of the rain but, rather, to collect all of it in his small garden and irrigate it. I tell you, my sons, that oftentimes one day of rain is sufficient for the entire year and keeps all of the fruits alive; for this reason, we must be attentive. When we realize that the rain (of tears) has come, let us strive to guard ourselves and let us devote ourselves to fervent supplication to God, for we do not know whether we will have such rain on another day."

18. We asked him again: "How is one to preserve compunction when it does come?" The Elder replied to us: "On that day, or as long as one's contrition of soul lasts, he should be careful not to visit anyone. He should also guard himself from gluttony and haughtiness, so that he does not imagine that he is weeping at all and so that he does not judge anyone; and he should persist in prayer and reading. At the same time, when (Godly) contrition enters into our soul, it will teach us which kinds of things are conducive to it and preserve it, and which hinder it.

"I know a brother who was sitting in his cell, weaving a basket, when contrition was suddenly born in his soul. Then, as soon as tears began to come, he arose to pray and they ceased at once. So he resumed his weaving and collected his mind, and once more tears came. The same thing happened to him at the time of reading; while he was reading, he was overcome by compunction; but no sooner did he arise to pray than the tears stopped. But when he looked closely at the book, he began to weep again. The brother then understood the reason for this difference and said inside himself that the Fathers were right in saying that contrition is our teacher; for it teaches a man all that is to his benefit.

"I am of the opinion that contrition left the brother's soul during prayer for two reasons. The first is that he had not yet acquired prayer that was pure and free from distraction. His mind was running hither

and thither out of anxiety and he was not preserving his former compunction, which was produced within him while he was engaged in handiwork and reading, since he concentrated his mind more on these activities. Secondly, this happened so that he might not suppose that he had managed to attain contrition by his own effort and prayer, but that so that he could understand that it had been granted to him by the mercy and Grace of God, and might, therefore, be moved to thank God and acquire greater humility, whereby the contrition within him would be further strengthened. Should something similar ever happen to us, that is, should we experience compunction of heart and fervent tears, let us immediately disregard everything else and have recourse to prayer, persevering in it, until we feel the flame of the heart being kindled within us; for we might otherwise not find a similar opportunity."

19. An Elder said: "If you see that God granted you compunction a short while ago, lay aside your handiwork at that moment, if you know what is good for you; that is, if you discover that, by occupying yourself with your handiwork, you will somehow limit your contrition, then apply yourself to Godly mourning, in case the day of your death is at hand and God granted you tears so that you might thereby obtain a little mercy. For just as Satan hastens to lure a man into perdition at the end of his life, so also God often saves a man at the end of his life by some opportunity that He affords him."

20. An Elder said: "Just as we carry evil, that is, our passions and sins, with us everywhere, so also we should always have mourning and compunction with us, wherever we may be."

21. A brother asked an Elder: "Father, what am I to do?" The Elder answered him: "We should always weep. One of the Fathers once fell sick and fainted, but he recovered. We asked him to tell us what he had seen in the place to which he had gone, and he replied to us with the following words: 'I heard the sound of weeping people, who kept saying, "Woe is me."'" And the Elder concluded: "Even so should we always be in a state of mourning."

22. Two brothers according to the flesh renounced the world and placed themselves under an Elder who lived in asceticism on Mount Nitria.•• God gave both of them the gift of tears and compunction.

One day, the Elder had a vision: he saw the two brothers standing

at prayer, each of them holding a piece of paper with writing on it, each moistening his piece with his tears. The letters of the one brother were readily erased, while those of the other washed away only with effort, for they appeared to have been inscribed with indelible ink. The Elder then prayed that the dream might be explained to him.

An Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said: "The letters on the paper are the sins of the two brothers. The one sinned within the limits of nature, for which reason his sins are easily obliterated; but the other fell into unclean and unnatural sins, and this is why he needs to toil more, so that he may repent sincerely and utterly humble himself."

From that time on, the Elder would say to that brother: "Toil, brother, because everything is inscribed with fire and can only be erased with great effort." He did not disclose the vision to him until his death, so as not to take the edge off his eagerness, but he would always tell him: "Toil, brother, because everything is inscribed with fire."

23. A zealous monk was performing his prayer rule together with his spiritual brother; but he was overcome with tears and left off chanting the Psalm verse. One day, his brother asked him to tell him what he was thinking about during the prayer rule and why he was weeping so bitterly. He answered: "Forgive me, brother, but during my prayer rule, I always behold the Judge, and I see myself standing as a defendant who is being cross-examined. Since I do not know what to say in my defense, I am dumbfounded and my mouth is shut. This is why I lose track of the Psalm verse. Forgive me for causing you distress; and if you do not object, let each of us do his prayer rule separately." "No, Father," the other replied, "because, since I have no contrition, when I see you, I chastise myself." And God, seeing his humility, bestowed on him, too, the contrition that his brother had.

For our part, let us pay careful attention to those who mourn, for by so doing we will reap all of the benefits which that brother reaped.

24. An Elder said: "Just as 'every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body' (I Corinthians 6:18), because the pollution comes out his body, so also every work of virtue that a man accomplishes is 'without the body'; but he who weeps over his sins cleanses both soul and body. For tears descend from on high, washing and sanctifying the whole body."

25. The same Elder said: "Discussing matters of faith and reading

books about dogma cause a man's compunction to wither and disappear; by contrast, the lives and sayings of the Elders enlighten the soul, filling it with spiritual tears."•••

26. An Elder said: "A man who sits in his cell and studies the Psalms is like one who stands outside looking for the King. He who beseeches God with weeping is like one who grasps the King's feet and begs him to show mercy, as did that harlot who, within a few moments, washed away all of her sins through her tears."••••

27. An Elder said: "If a man is by nature a struggler, God demands of him that he not have attachment to any material thing, not even to a needle; for this, too, is capable of hindering his mind from constant preoccupation with Jesus and of dissipating Godly mourning."

28. An Elder took his disciple and went to a certain city on some errand, remaining there for a week. Every day, he saw many men and women going from the city early in the morning to a cemetery and all lamenting their dead until the third hour. So the Elder said to his disciple: "Do you see, brother, what these people wake up for? Believe me, if we do not do the same, we will go to perdition."

When they returned to their cell, they constructed tombs for themselves, the one far apart from the other, and every day each of them would sit before his tomb, weeping over his soul as if it were a corpse, from morning until evening. If it ever happened that the disciple fell asleep in the morning from doing his prayer rule, the Elder would shout, in order to wake him up, and say to him: "Get up, brother; they (the demons) have now been at the tombs for an hour and they are doing their work."

One day, the brother said to the Elder: "My heart is becoming hard and I am unable to weep." "Struggle and labor for a short time, my child," answered the Elder. "God, Who sees your toil, will have mercy on you. Just as the heart, when it is pierced by an arrow, can no longer be healed, so also, when God pricks it with contrition, pain never departs from it thereafter; it remains wounded until death. Wherever such a man may go, he always has contrition as an inseparable companion."

On another occasion, when the Elder saw that the brother was weighed down from over-eating (for some people had come to visit them the evening before), he said to him in private: "Do you not know that contrition is a small lamp, which, if you light it and do not cover it

carefully, is quickly extinguished and goes out? So, too, contrition is extinguished by large amounts of food and impeded by much sleep; slander destroys it; and loquacity and, in general, all bodily respite, drives it away and obliterates it. He who loves God and desires to preserve a feeling of contrition should, in every task that he performs, dedicate one part of it to Christ."

"What do these words mean, Father?" asked the brother. And the Elder replied: "Do you wish to learn how one can set aside a part for Christ in everything that he does? Pay attention: when, for example, some quality bread comes your way, put it aside for another brother to eat; and as for yourself, for the sake of Christ eat some moldy bread. If, again, you are given some good wine, mix it with a little vinegar, for the sake of Christ, Who drank vinegar. Do not gorge (when you eat), but leave a little food aside and say: 'Here is a portion for Christ.' If you find a soft pillow, put it aside and use a rock, for the sake of Christ.

"If you feel cold when you sleep, endure it and say: 'Other people are not sleeping at all.' If you are cooking food for yourself to eat, spoil it a little and say: 'Others, though they deserve it, do not even eat bread, while I, who am unworthy, eat cooked food—whereas I ought to be eating dust and ashes on account of my unclean deeds.' To put it simply, mingle a little affliction in all that you do and live humbly, keeping in mind how the Saints lived. In this way, when the hour of death comes, we, too, will have experienced a certain amount of affliction and distress and will thereby attain rest in the next life."

29. An Elder said: "If you leave your cell and go somewhere, and your contrition weakens a little—either from your manner of life or for some other reason—return quickly and resume your previous ascetic labors, so that you may renew your inward mourning and not lose it."

30. The same Elder said: "If you wish to acquire contrition, strive to ensure that all your vessels and goods are poor, like those of our brothers who sit in the marketplace and beg."

31. The same Elder said: "If you do not have compunction, know that you are suffering from vainglory or the love of pleasure; for these vices do not allow a soul to feel compunction."

32. The same Elder said: "If God grants you contrition, do not think that you are doing anything important by constantly weeping, thereby

letting proud thoughts spring up in your heart; otherwise, God will take away your tears, and in the future your heart will remain hard and without compunction."

33. The same Elder said: "If there is a cemetery in the place where you live, go there often and bring to mind the people who are buried there—and this, above all, if you are bothered by carnal warfare. If you learn that a brother is preparing to depart to the Lord, go and stay by his side, so that you may see how the soul is parted from the body, for from this you will feel compunction."

34. The same Elder said: "When Satan sees God showing mercy to you and bestowing compunction on your soul, he then reminds you of some indispensable task that you must perform in your cell. 'Do this today,' he says, 'because it is urgent.' Or, he suggests to you that you have a duty to meet someone—which may perhaps be pressing—with a view to getting you out of your cell, either on some spiritual pretext or for some other plausible reason. The Enemy does all of these things so as not to allow you to exercise concentration in your cell or to enjoy the sweetness of contrition. Even if you realize that he is deceiving you, and if you guard yourself and persist in prayer and reading, expect yet another temptation to come upon you immediately from men or from demons; for Satan ruthlessly wars against a man when that man puts up a good fight against him. Anger, more than all of the other passions, obliterates compunction and humility of soul."

35. The same Elder said: "When God smote Egypt with the plagues, there was not a house that did not mourn.••••• If, therefore, fear of God and the word of God have trampled down the sin that is in us, let us not cease to feel contrition. For, contrition has two aspects: it is a source of spiritual labor and it protects us. Let us pray that God grants us this gift."

* Chaleb ["Caleb"—*Trans.*] and Jesus ["Joshua"—*Trans.*], the son of Navi, were the only Jews who succeeded in entering the Promised Land, because all of the others above the age of twenty were punished by God for murmuring against Him. After the subjugation of Canaan, Jesus, the son of Navi, the successor of Moses, divided the land between the twelve tribes of Israel, and Chaleb, the son of Jephone, who was descended from the tribe of Judah, received as his portion the "city of Arboc the metropolis of Enac" [i.e., present-day Hebron—*Trans.*]. Chaleb then attempted to capture the city of Dabir and said that he would give his daughter, Ascha, in marriage to whomsoever captured the city of Dabir. Gothoniel, the son of Chenez, captured it. When her father was lead-

ing her to Gothoniel, she cried from the ass on which she was sitting, and Chaleb asked her what she wanted. Then she replied: "Give me a blessing, for thou hast set me in the land of Nageb; give me Gothalmaïn." And Chaleb gave her Gothalmaïn the upper and Gothalmaïn the lower (Joshua 15:13-20).

** The stocks consisted of a plank of wood with two apertures, in which a convict's feet were placed to prevent him from moving. This punishment was tiring and painful.

*** All of the comments that the author makes in this passage pertain to the extraordinary miracle of the raising of Christ's friend, Lazarus, who was dead for four days. As St. John the Evangelist relates to us (St. John 11:1-44), when Lazarus fell sick, his sisters Martha and Mary notified the Lord that His friend was ailing. However, He did not hasten to go immediately to Bethany, the hometown of Lazarus. He did so after several days, by which time Lazarus had already died and been buried, saying to His Disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (St. John 11:11). When Christ arrived in Bethany, Martha rushed out to meet Him, while Mary remained in their house. Martha complained to Jesus that if He had been there, her brother would not have died. But later on, encouraged by Jesus' assurance that her brother would be resurrected, she summoned Mary, and the whole company went to the tomb, where Christ resurrected Lazarus, after they had rolled away the stone which covered it. When Lazarus arose, Christ said: "Loose him, and let him go" (St. John 11:44). Afterwards, "they made Him a supper" (St. John 12:2), and while Lazarus sat at the same table as Jesus, Martha waited on the guests and Mary, taking some very expensive myrrh, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them clean with the hairs of her head. The author here likens contrition to Mary and Martha and the mind to Lazarus. That is, just as Martha and Mary begged Jesus to resurrect Lazarus, so also contrition and suffering contribute to freeing the mind. And when the mind is delivered from sinful thoughts, it remains thereafter free from care, just like Lazarus, who sat at the same table as Jesus. Contrition and suffering are transformed into joy in the same way that Martha and Mary rejoiced over the raising of their brother, and Martha served with joy, although her duties were tiring, while Mary anointed Jesus' feet with myrrh in order to display her exceptional joy.

**** This question is raised here because, according to the rules of the monastic life, one who renounces the world must renounce and forget everything that ties him to the world, and even his parents; for otherwise, it is impossible for him to succeed in his withdrawal from the world. With this in mind, the Master told the disciple who asked for permission to go and bury his father: "Let the dead bury their dead" (St. Matthew 8:22). On another occasion, He said to the Twelve: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (St. Matthew 10:37).

***** Regarding Nitria, see the endnotes for Hypothesis VI, Book I—*Trans.*

• See the endnotes for Hypothesis XIV, above—*Trans.*

•• Regarding Mount Nitria, see the endnotes for Hypothesis III, above—*Trans.*

••• Very true and most wise are these words of that blessed Elder, and I would that all of us monks might put them into practice. For in truth, the lives and sayings of the Elders, when we hear them and treasure them up, enlighten our souls and inundate our eyes with tears, which are so essential for the salvation of our precious and immortal souls. It would be desirable if there were no need for monastics to concern themselves with dogmatic issues, so that they might thereby avoid having to depart from their vocation. However, since the Devil, the sower of evil, does not cease from sowing his tares, through which he endeavors to entice souls into perdition, it behooves those

monks who have a command of dogmatic issues, when the need arises, not only to deal with them, but also to struggle with all of their power, even sacrificing their very lives in order that the truth might prevail. But those who depart from the narrow confines of their monastic duties in order to deal with such a need should not involve themselves in these kinds of struggles on their own initiative, but after they have been summoned by their superiors to undertake such a task. It is necessary that those who are chosen for this purpose not only have a command of theological and dogmatic issues, but also be proven in virtue, lest, in attempting to save others, they themselves be caught in the Enemy's nets, since the danger of this is great. But those who are proven in virtue should, immediately after they have completed their mission, restrict themselves to their narrow monastic duties, to the works of repentance—namely, contrition and tears—because when they spend a long time away from these, they become estranged from the Grace of God and fall into countless dangers.

•••• The statements in this passage refer to the sinful woman who approached Jesus when He was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, two days before the Passover, bearing "an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious," and who, after breaking the box, poured it on His head (St. Mark 14:3; St. Matthew 26:6-7). This woman is different from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who also anointed the Lord's feet with myrrh, six days before the Passover, in her house. (Regarding this incident, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XIII, p. 421.)

••••• He means by this the tenth and last plague visited on Pharaoh, during which an Angel of the Lord smote, in a single night, all of the firstborn male children of the Egyptians, after Pharaoh would not allow the Israelites to depart from Egypt and return to the Promised Land.

Hypothesis XXXIII

That demons attack a man with greater intensity at the end of his life; for this reason, we should be all the more attentive at this time.

A. From Palladios

An educated man from Alexandria, Evlogios by name, wounded by Divine love, decided to renounce the world. And so, after distributing his property—with the exception of a few items, which he kept for his own maintenance, since he was unable to work—he pondered on what he should do with himself. For he had not made any decision to enter a monastic community, but his conscience assured him that it was not good for him to remain on his own. In this hesitant state, he came across an abandoned cripple in the marketplace. This man had neither feet nor hands; only his tongue was left, and with it he would importune the passersby to take pity on him.

On seeing this cripple, Evlogios was stung in his heart with profound sorrow, and he immediately offered a silent prayer to God and made an agreement with the Lord: "O Lord, in Thy Name I am taking this cripple with me, and I will look after him until he dies, so that I may be saved through him. Grant me, therefore, O Lord, the patience that I will need in order to serve him."

He then approached the cripple and said to him: "Old man, would you like me to take you to my house and look after you?" "If only you would deign to do so," replied the cripple, "but I am unworthy of this." "I will go and fetch an ass to take you away from here." With great joy, the cripple agreed.

So Evlogios brought an ass, took the cripple, and went to his house, in order to provide him with hospitality. There, he attended to his every need: he washed him, anointed him with various ointments, carried him in his own arms, and eagerly served him for fifteen years in all.

But a demon subsequently entered the cripple in a frenzy and incited him, without due cause, to rave against Evlogios. He egged him on to utter abuse and use foul language against him. "You good-for-nothing," he would say insultingly to Evlogios, "you stole other people's money, and when you were a slave, you ripped off your master; and

now you want to escape, on the pretext that you took me into your home to do me a favor, and you aim to be saved through me."

In reply, Evlogios implored him, saying: "Do not say such things, sir; tell me how I have grieved you and I will correct myself." But the cripple answered him harshly: "I don't want any of your flatteries. Go and cast me again into the marketplace; that suits me better than your looking after me." "Please, sir," insisted Evlogios, "if you are upset about anything, I am at your service." The cripple then became even more angry and cried out with a loud voice: "Staying only with you doesn't satisfy me; I want people." "I will bring you a crowd of brothers at once," replied Evlogios. Losing his patience, the cripple once again shouted: "Alas for me, wretch that I am! I don't want to look at your mug, and you want to drag over here a bunch of good-for-nothings like yourself?" And convulsed by the evil spirit, he cried out again: "I don't want this, I don't want this, I want to go to the marketplace! Oh, oh, how you oppress me! Throw me down where you found me!"

If the cripple had possessed hands at that moment, he certainly would not have hesitated even to hang himself or to run himself through with a sword—to such an extent had the demon enraged him.

Evlogios was at a loss, not knowing what to do. Following the advice that he was given by some ascetics who lived nearby, he decided to go with the cripple to St. Anthony the Great, in order to relate the incident to him and to do whatever he advised. After coaxing the cripple with sweet talk and putting him on a boat, he took him to the monastery of the disciples of St. Anthony the Great. He was told that the Saint would come down from his mountain to this monastery, sometimes every ten days, sometimes every twenty days, for the benefit of visitors.

In fact, the Saint came the day after Evlogios arrived, late in the evening, wearing a leather cloak, as Kronios, who was there at the time, related to me. After greeting everyone who was present, St. Anthony sat down and immediately called for Evlogios, whom he had never seen and about whom he knew nothing, by name. Although St. Anthony called his name out three times, Evlogios did not answer, because he thought that the Saint was calling someone else—someone whom he knew with the same name. St. Anthony again said: "I am talking to you, the one who has come from Alexandria."

Evlogios replied: "Please, what do you want?" "Why have you come here?" St. Anthony asked. And Evlogios answered: "Whoever revealed my name to you must surely also have disclosed everything that is bothering me." "I know why you have come," St. Anthony said, "but say it

in front of all the brethren, so that they, too, may find out." In front of everyone, including the cripple, Evlogios began to explain: "Man of God, I found this cripple in the marketplace, abandoned and neglected. I felt deeply sorry for him and I prayed to God that He would grant me the gift of patience to look after him. I promised Christ that I would take care of him until the end of his life, so that he might find respite through me and I, too, might be saved through him.

"So I took him to my house, and I have been serving him for fifteen years, to the best of my ability. But just recently, having been wronged by me in some way—I do not know how—he has been causing me great distress. I have thought of throwing him out, for he has brought me to that point. That is why I have come to Your Holiness, so that you may advise me what I should do and so that you can pray for me, because this man is sorely vexing me."

On hearing this, St. Anthony answered him severely and reproachfully: "You would throw him out, Evlogios? Indeed, He Who created him does not throw him out, and yet you would throw him out? God will raise up a better man than you to take care of him." When he heard these words, Evlogios cowered in fear.

St. Anthony next turned to the cripple and began to give him a tongue-lashing, saying: "You cripple, maimed as you are, you who are unworthy of earth or Heaven, will you not stop fighting against God and angering your brother? Are you not aware that the One Who serves you is Christ? How dare you utter such words against Christ? Did Evlogios not become your slave for Christ's sake, in order to serve you?" After scourging the cripple with these harsh words, he dismissed them and spoke with the other brothers, according to the need of each.

Then he turned again to Evlogios and the cripple and said to them: "Go in peace, my sons, and do not part from one another; since you have driven away all of the sorrow which the demon planted in your hearts, return with love to the place in which you have lived together for so many years. For Satan convulsed you with this temptation, because he saw that you are both nearing the end of your lives and that you are going to receive crowns from God; he [the cripple] will be crowned because of you [Evlogios] and you [Evlogios] because of him [the cripple]. Do not think about anything else, lest the Angel, whom God is already sending to you, come and not find you in the same place; for if so, you will forfeit your crowns."

The two men therefore left at once and returned to their place in perfect mutual love. After three days, the Blessed Evlogios reposed and

thirty-seven days later, he who was physically crippled, but spiritually healed, departed to the Lord.

Having stayed for a short while in the regions of the Thebaid,* Kronios descended to the monasteries of Alexandria after forty days. On the day that he arrived, it so happened that the brotherhood was observing the forty-day memorial of Evlogios and the three-day memorial of the cripple. When Kronios heard this, he was astounded! He recounted to the Fathers all that St. Anthony had prophesied about these men. For, on that occasion, Kronios himself interpreted and translated for St. Anthony everything that Evlogios said—since he spoke Greek—and everything that St. Anthony said to him and the cripple, since the Saint spoke Egyptian to everyone, not being acquainted with any other language.

* See endnotes for Hypothesis I, "Thebaid," above—*Trans.*

Hypothesis XXXIV

Nothing is so inappropriate for the believer as familiarity and laughter; this present hypothesis also treats of reverence and its characteristic features.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother once went to Abba Agathon and said to him: "I want to live with other brethren; tell me, then, how should I behave when I am with them?"

The Elder replied: "Just as on the first day that you go to live with them you will feel like a stranger, so also, throughout the days of your life, you should preserve this sense of being a stranger who is arriving for the first time, so as not to acquire familiarity with them." Abba Makarios asked him: "What effect can such familiarity have?" "Familiarity," replied the Elder, "is like a burning heat which, when it prevails, everyone endeavors to escape; at the same time, it burns up the fruit of the trees." "Is familiarity, then, such a terrible thing?" asked Abba Makarios. Abba Agathon answered: "There is no passion more terrible than familiarity, for it gives rise to all of the other passions."

2. It was said about Abba Pambo that he never laughed. One day, the demons wanted to make him laugh; to this end, they tied a feather to a piece of wood and carried it in, making a din and saying: "Hey! Hey!" When he saw them, Abba Pambo laughed. The demons then began to cavort and say: "Bravo! Bravo! Pambo laughed!" "I did not laugh," Abba Pambo replied to them, "but I mocked your feebleness, because it takes so many of you to carry a feather."

3. An Elder said: "Familiarity and laughter are like a fire that consumes the stubble. For, just as the fire destroys the stubble within a short time, so also does familiarity destroy virtue."

4. Abba Moses said: "Let us acquire reverence, dignity, and meekness towards all people, as well as precise knowledge of them, so that we may be able to avoid familiarity, which is the mother of all evils."

5. Abba Nisthero said: "It is completely alien to a monk to swear oaths, to lie, to curse, to utter insults, or to laugh."

6. An Elder saw a younger monk laughing and told him: "Do not laugh, brother, for you are expelling the fear of God from your heart."

7. An Elder said: "Reverence, coupled with humble-mindedness, is good in every circumstance. For one can jest and think that he has joy. If he does this constantly, he becomes worthy of condemnation; whereas, one who is reverent makes himself secure through humble-mindedness and is always held in honor."

B. From St. Ephraim

The beginning of a monk's downfall is laughter and familiarity. When you see yourself in bondage to these, O monk, know that you have ended up in an abyss of evils. Laughter and familiarity destroy the fruits of a monk and lure him into shameful passions; and not only in youth, but also in old age. For laughter drives out the blessedness of contrition, grieves the Holy Spirit, banishes the fear of God and the recollection of death and Hell, and ruins all that a monk has built up, leading him into irreparable ruin. Take away from me, O Lord, the inclination to laugh, and grant me contrition and tears, which Thou seekest from me.

C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Laughter is completely forbidden to Christians, but above all to monks, who have crucified themselves to the world. "If any man will come after Me," Christ says, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (St. Matthew 16:24). How is it possible for one who has been crucified with the sweet nails of the Cross to make merry and laugh? For our calling is not to be empty-headed or to laugh, so that we inherit "woe," as do the idolaters of the world, but to mourn without ceasing, so that we may enjoy the consolation of Heaven.

D. From Abba Isaiah

If someone among you says something in order to provoke laughter, be sure that your voice is not heard further away, because this be-

trays a lack of monastic formation and fear of God and shows that there is no self-control among you; for wrath has come upon the inhabited earth in our days.

E. From Abba Isaac the Syrian

Do not praise one who performs physical labor, but is distracted in his senses—by which I mean the sense of hearing, a mouth that is continually open and unrestrained, and roving eyes. Simplicity of mind is a natural consequence of love; it can also be a consequence of not keeping ourselves within the bounds of proper reverence, but transgressing them. As for you, brother, be vigilant in all things, and behave reverently towards those whom you love; in this way, you will maintain your soul in reverence and will edify both yourself and them, in such a way as not to cast off the bridle of attentiveness.

F. From St. Ephraim

1. A sign of an uneducated monk is that he sits amid his brothers and uncovers his feet; a reverent monk will sit with dignity.

2. A younger monk, who wanders around to the cells of the other monks, learns not only to be idle, but also to be a babbler and a busybody, since he utters inappropriate words. But he who maintains stillness in humility will become beloved. Just as a gold necklace adorns a person's neck, so reverence befits a monk.

3. Brother, flee far away from frivolous jesting, lest you become shameless. For shamelessness is the mother of licentiousness.

4. An Elder saw someone laughing and said to him: "We are going to give an account of all our deeds before Heaven and earth, and yet you are laughing?"

[Here, the Fathers put forth a high standard of sobriety, as a warning against frivolity and witless guffawing, cackling, and undignified displays of jocularity. Humor and subdued laughter are not inimical to proper Christian or—within limits—monastic life. But the strict observance of the desert Fathers should serve as a guideline for controlling such behavior. *Cf.* our note at the conclusion of Hypothesis XXX—*Editors.*]

Hypothesis XXXV

One should never become angry or shout at anyone; how anger is generated and how it can be cured.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Agathon said that an irascible man, even if he should raise the dead, is not acceptable before God.

2. Abba Poimen said: "One who constantly complains is not a monk; one who is vindictive is not a monk; one who is easily angered is not a monk. Anyone who has these faults is not a monk, even if he thinks he is."

3. Abba Isidore said: "I once went to a marketplace to sell some handiwork, and when I saw that I was becoming angry, I left my handiwork there and fled."

4. On one occasion, some Arians* went to Abba Sisoes, on the mountain of Abba Anthony, and immediately began to denounce the Orthodox. The Elder did not say anything to them; he merely called his disciple and said to him: "Bring the book by St. Athanasios** and read it." They remained silent as their heresy was disclosed, and Abba Sisoes subsequently dismissed them, after wishing them a good journey.

5. A certain anchorite was consecrated a Bishop. This man, being of a pious and peaceful disposition, did not rebuke anyone, but, in his forbearance, put up with the sins of each person. Now, his Steward did not administer the affairs of the Church as he should have. Some people then said to the Bishop: "Why do you not punish your Steward, who holds you in such disdain?"

The Bishop postponed reprimanding him until the next day. On that following day, the Steward's accusers came to him. But when the Bishop learned of this, he hid somewhere, and those who wanted to speak to him could not find him. When they did find him, after a good deal of searching, they asked him: "Why did you hide from us?" "Because,"

the Bishop replied, "you wish to rob me in two days of what I have accomplished in sixty years of beseeching God."

I think that the Elder was forced into becoming a Bishop. For this reason, he was more concerned about the law of the anchorites than about the duties of a Bishop.***

6. Abba Poimen heard, concerning someone, that he was distressed for six days out of the week on account of anger, and he said: "He has learned to suffer during those six days and, yet, he has not learned to drive out anger."

7. A brother felt anger in his soul against someone; however, he restrained himself and besought God in prayer that he might be forbearing towards his brother and that the temptation might pass by without harm; and at once he saw smoke coming out of his mouth.

B. From Abba Isaiah

Brother, if someone causes you grief in any matter whatsoever, and it becomes necessary for you to reprove your brother, and you see that you are angry and agitated, do not speak to him at all, lest you become more upset; when you see that the two of you have calmed down, then speak to him, not chiding him, but reminding him of his error, in all humility.

C. From Abba Mark

The passion of anger is based, in particular, on pride, and when it is reinforced, it is impossible to overcome it. If one wishes to demolish and level to the ground this house of iniquity, which the Evil One is forever constructing in the soul, gathering and using for stones various excuses, whether reasonable or unreasonable, from among the different events and words that whirl around in our minds, in order to erect in our souls the edifice of evil, let him keep the humility of the Lord in his heart, without forgetting it even for a moment. Let him consider Who the Lord was, what He became for our sake, and from what a height of Divine light—which is revealed by the essences on high, according to their power, and which is glorified in the Heavens by every noetic nature—to what a depth of human abasement He condescended, moved by His boundless goodness.

Let him reflect on the fact that the Master of all creation, both visible and invisible, was not ashamed to assume human nature, which had been condemned by His own decree and had fallen into dishonorable passions. He humbled Himself and became like us in all things, save sin; that is, He was free from dishonorable passions. For all that had been imposed on mankind by the sentence of the Master as a chastisement for transgression—namely, death, weariness, hunger, thirst, and the like—all of these things He took upon Himself, becoming what we are, that we might become what He is. The Word became flesh (that is, man), that the flesh might become God by Grace; and He became like us in all things, that we might become like the Word in all of the virtues. And—to pass over many other things—for our sake, He accepted dishonor, insults, and scourging. He was spat upon, mocked, jeered, and finally crucified, pierced in His side by a spear, died, and descended into Hades.

Let me briefly enumerate the fruits of His Holy Passion: to wit, the Resurrection from the dead, the despoiling of Hades and death, the souls that were resurrected together with the Lord, the Ascension into Heaven, the Enthronement at the right hand of the Father, the honor and glory surpassing every principality and authority and every name that is known, and the worship of the Firstborn of the dead by all of the Angels, on account of His sufferings, as the Apostle says (Hebrews 2:5-18).

He who preserves these thoughts in his heart with love and is not inclined to forget them will not be overcome by the passion of bitterness and anger. For through the humility of Christ, on which he constantly ponders, the foundations of the passion of pride will be undermined and the entire edifice of iniquitous anger will easily and automatically come tumbling down. What heart, no matter how stony and hard it may be, when it constantly recalls the great abasement of the Godhead of the Only-begotten, which came about for our sake, and the patience which He showed in so many sufferings, will not feel contrition, will not be humbled, will not experience compunction, and will not become earth and ashes and trampled underfoot by every man? What anger or bitterness could overcome such a contrite heart?

I believe, therefore, that unless the mother of evils, forgetfulness, drives these salvific and life-giving thoughts from his heart, a man will never be overcome by anger.

D. From St. Diadochos

Those who struggle should always keep their minds undisturbed, in order to discern the thoughts that enter it: to store the good thoughts which God sends in the treasuries of the memory, but to cast the evil thoughts which the demons inspire outside the natural repositories of the mind. For when the sea is calm, fisherman see every movement therein, down to the very depths, so that none of the fish swimming around in it escapes their notice. But when it is stirred up by the winds, it hides with the turbidity of its surge those things which it made visible through the gladdening calm.

For this reason, fishermen do not work in stormy weather; the contemplative mind experiences the same thing when the soul is deeply disturbed, and above all by unjust anger.

E. From St. Cassian

He who wishes to strive lawfully in spiritual combat, let him become a stranger to every fault, to both wrath and anger, and let him heed the instruction given by the Chosen Vessel:**** "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31). In saying "all," he allows us no occasion for anger, other than what is necessary or justified.

As for one who wishes to correct an erring brother or to impose a punishment on him, let him ensure that he remains free from disturbance, lest in his desire to cure the other he himself contracts the disease, in which case the Gospel sayings will be applied to him: "Physician, heal thyself" (St. Luke 4:23), or: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (St. Matthew 7:3; St. Luke 6:42). Indeed, how will you see the mote, so as to cast it out of your brother's eye, when you have the beam of anger in your own eye and it covers you entirely? For from whatever cause anger derives, if it boils over it blinds the eyes of the soul and does not allow it to see the Sun of Righteousness.

That is, just as one who places plates of gold or lead over his eyes equally obstructs his vision, and the gold plate does not differ in value with regard to blindness, in the same way the visual faculty of the soul is darkened when anger is kindled in us, from whatever cause, be it reasonable or unreasonable. We are only justified in having recourse to anger when we rouse it against passionate and voluptuous thoughts.

This is what the Prophet David teaches us when he says: "Be angry, and sin not" (Psalm 4:5); that is, direct anger against your passions and

evil thoughts and do not sin by carrying out what your thoughts suggest to you. This meaning is made crystal clear by the words that follow: "Feel compunction upon your beds for what ye say in your hearts" (*ibid.*). That is, when evil thoughts come into your hearts, drive them out by your anger towards them; after you have driven them out, be calm, as if you were on a bed, and endeavor to feel the compunction that comes from repentance.

The Blessed Paul agrees with David, for he appeals to the testimony of this Psalm verse and adds: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the Devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27); that is, do not give yourselves occasion for Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, to go down in your hearts by angering Him through your assent to shameful thoughts, lest the Devil find a place in your souls when the noetic Sun withdraws.

For this reason, we should conform to the Divine laws and struggle with all of our might against the spirit of anger and against the sickness that resides in us. We should not be angry at people and, as a result, seek after the desert and solitude, since there is supposedly nothing there to goad us to anger, thinking that it will be easy for us to acquire the virtue of forbearance.

It is from pride, from not being willing to accuse ourselves, and from not ascribing to ourselves the causes of our own inner turmoil that we desire to flee from our brothers; as long as we have this inclination and this mentality, and as long as we ascribe the causes of our indolence and spiritual debility to others, we will be unable to attain to perfect forbearance. For our correction will not be accomplished by the forbearance of our neighbor towards us, but by our own long-suffering.

If we seek after the desert and solitude, thereby running away from the struggle of forbearance, let us be well aware that our inner passions and, above all, the passion of anger will be exacerbated to a greater degree; they will be aroused because we are not associating with other people. And even this shadow of patience and forbearance, which we thought we had—albeit in appearance—when we were with the brothers, we lose when deprived of practice and correction.

For this reason, those who wish to acquire meekness should endeavor not to get angry, not only at people, but also at animals or even inanimate things. I remember that when I was in the desert, on one occasion I got angry at a reed because its thickness or thinness displeased me; and on another occasion, I got angry at a piece of wood, when I wanted to cut it, since I could not cut it quickly enough, and also at a

flint, because I was in a hurry to light a fire and the spark did not leap out quickly enough. So great did my anger become, that I displayed it even against inanimate things.

Let us, therefore, cast all anger away from ourselves and let us fear the decree of the Lord, Who declared in the Gospel: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (St. Matthew 5:22). This reading is found only in those texts that are deemed accurate; that is to say, the words "without a cause" were added by people who were not willing to cut off the passion of anger completely. [There are actually two textual and Patristic traditions with regard to this passage. "Without a cause" is found in the majority of the Byzantine Scriptural manuscripts. With regard to the Patristic tradition, Origen and St. Irenaeus, cite both readings, St. Basil exudes the clause (or word, since in Greek, this clause is expressed in the single word "*eike*"), and St. John Chrysostomos and St. Cyril of Alexandria include it in their commentaries—*Editors.*] The Lord's intention is that we should in every way eradicate and cut off the cause of this passion, as well as the causes of the other passions, and not retain within us any pretext for anger, lest, though we are initially moved to anger with supposed good reason, we later fall into a frenzy of irrational anger.

This, then, is the perfect remedy for this disease: that we should endeavor not to become angry either for just or unjust reasons. For, when this dark passion clouds our minds, we will not have the light of discernment or the security of right counsel; nor will we be guided by righteousness. And the Holy Spirit will flee from us, driven away by our inner turmoil.

In addition to all that we have said, we should have the uncertain hour of death unceasingly before our eyes, guard ourselves from anger, and forsake wrath, as the Prophet advises us (Psalm 36:8). Let us not forget that neither chastity, nor renunciation of all material things, nor fasts, vigils, and other hardships will be of any avail to us, if, at the dread Judgment, we are shown to be in the grip of anger and hatred, and consequently are found guilty.

F. From St. Maximos

The appetitive faculty of the soul [*epithymetikon—Trans.*], the more frequently it is stimulated, engenders in the soul a voluptuous disposition that is difficult to overcome, whereas anger, by constantly disturbing the soul, renders it cowardly and effeminate; voluptuousness is

St. Maximos the Confessor

cured by the intense ascetic efforts of fasting, vigil, and prayer, but anger by kindness, charity, love, and mercy.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "The passions which man acquires in opposition to his nature were deified and worshipped by the ancient Greeks.***** They tormented those who did not wish to worship them, murdered them, and unwittingly made them Martyrs. As for us, if we succumb to the passions, we do not differ in any way from idolaters. For one who is overcome by anger and wrath is a slave to these passions, and one who does not make any effort to cut off the fury of these passions denies Jesus, has Ares• as a god inside him, and worships the idol of rage, as did the ancient Greeks.

The avaricious man who does not show compassion to his brother and who does not give alms to his neighbor is also an idolater who reveres the idol of Hermes•• and worships the creation instead of the Creator. The same applies to the other passions: "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage," as the Apostle says (II St. Peter 2:19), calling avarice a second form of idolatry. But he who has conquered the passions and expelled them from himself, or abstains from them, has trampled upon the idols, rejected superstition, and become a bloodless Martyr, by virtue of his good confession.

2. The Blessed Zosimas said that one makes a beginning at controlling anger by not speaking when he is upset; from this beginning, by the Grace of God, he attains to perfect tranquillity. Abba Moses—he continued—was upset, at first, when he was humiliated by the Fathers, who said to him: "Why does this Negro come among us?" But he did not speak, as he himself told those who asked him. Subsequently, when he was insulted by the clergy and driven out of the Altar, not only was he not upset, but he even reproached himself, saying: "You dark-skinned Negro, they treated you correctly; since you are not a human, why do you come among humans?"

But as for us, since we are inferior even to novices on account of our great negligence, we suppose that these injunctions are hyperbolic and impossible to fulfill. "It is not possible," we say, "for anyone not to be upset at all," and we do not listen to the Prophet, who says: "I made ready, and was not troubled" (Psalm 118:60) [reading in the original Greek text of *The Evergetinos*, "I was dishonored..."—*Trans.*]; nor do we

seek to make a decisive beginning by displaying a valiant and magnanimous intention to attract the Grace of God in due measure, for by this Grace those things which seem very difficult will become very easy for us to accomplish.

On one occasion, I was sitting with the Blessed Abbot Sergios from the Jordan Plain. While I was reading the Book of Proverbs,••• I came to the verse which says, "With much wood, fire increaseth; but where there is not a contentious man, strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20), and I asked the Blessed Sergios to explain it to me. He said in reply: "Just as wood causes a fire to flare up and, if we do not throw enough of it on the fire, it goes out, so also does it happen with the passions; that is, there are certain causes which, if cut off, no longer activate the passions. For example, the causes of anger are giving and taking, wanting to do one's own will, taking delight in teaching and showing off to other people, and thinking oneself to be intelligent and wise.

"If one cuts off these causes, the passion of anger is weakened. This is what Abba Sisoes meant when he was asked by someone: 'Why do the passions not depart from me?' 'Their tools, that is, their causes,' he replied, 'are inside you. Give the passions (i.e., the causes which provoke them) their due, and they will go away.' The contentious man, in whom there is no end of strife, is he who is not content with an initial disturbance, but goads himself to get angry for a second time. Obviously, if one gets angry and immediately comes to his senses, recognizes his mistake, and makes a prostration before the brother at whom he was angry, such a person is not called contentious. In the soul of this man, all strife is at rest, and for the present, by making a prostration to his brother, he has prevented the friendship from being destroyed, while in the future, by practicing repentance, he will come into a state of calm and tranquillity.

"However, one who gets angry and does not recognize his fault, but becomes still angrier, because he regrets that he did not say more than he did when he was upset, is called contentious. In his soul, strife never abates, and at the moment of strife, the agitation of his heart gives way to remembrance of wrongs, distress, and wickedness; and after this, the strife and the agitation caused by anger increase and multiply within him. That is, strife is aroused and it continues spreading until it completely dominates the hapless man and demonizes him. But may Jesus Christ, our good Master and Lord, deliver us from the lot of such people."

3. The same Elder said: "We are in need of much prayer and understanding, if we are to repel the various machinations of the Devil. For, sometimes he makes someone upset over nothing, while at other times he offers him a plausible pretext for thinking that he was right to be angry; and he suggests all of these things to the soul out of his hatred for mankind. The man who truly desires to traverse the way of the Saints is a complete stranger to anger against anyone. As St. Makarios the Great says: 'It is unbecoming for brothers to get angry at, or to cause anger in, another.'"

4. Abba John the Short said: "I was once walking along the path to Sketis with a camel-driver, who was conveying my goods on his camel; when I saw that he was talking and stirring up anger within me, I left my goods and fled."

5. Abba Hyperechios said: "He who does not control his tongue when he is angry will not be able to control his passions either."

6. Abba Ammonas said: "I have spent fourteen years in Sketis beseeching God, night and day, to grant me the Grace to overcome anger."

7. An Elder was asked: "What is anger?" And he replied: "quarrelling, lying, and ignorance."

8. Anger is a pit for a man. He who conquers anger has jumped over this pit. Blessed is the man who pulls the yoke of Christ the Master with meekness until the end; but the proud man multiplies disturbances and enmities against himself. An irascible and vociferous man will utter many profanities, but a quiet man is wise. Anger is a passion full of shame and insolence, which is followed by grief and regret; and grief devours the heart of one who has fallen into it.

H. From Abba Isaac

A fanatical man never attains to peace of mind, and one who is a stranger to peace is also a stranger to joy. Peace of mind both is, and is called, perfect health; but fanaticism is by nature antithetical to peace. One who is fanatical suffers from a grave sickness. O man, it is not good or beneficial for you to want to help others, yet to expose yourself to great danger. Fanaticism is not a form of wisdom, but a disease of the

soul. If you want to heal the ailing, know that the sick need compassion and care, and not reproof. For, Scripture says: "Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak" (*Cf.* Romans 15;1); and again, the same Apostle counsels us to correct one who has fallen, not in anger, but "in a spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1; *cf.* Philippians 2:2-4).

* The Arians were the followers of Arios [or Arius—Trans.], who taught that Christ was not the Son of God, consubstantial and co-unoriginate with the Father, but a creation of God. This heresy manifested itself in Alexandria, where Arios was a Priest, created great turmoil in the Christian Church, and lured many people into wrong belief. For this reason, St. Constantine the Great summoned the First Holy Œcumenical Synod in 325, in Nicæa, Bithynia, which condemned the heresy of Arios, proclaimed the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and composed the first eight articles of the Symbol of Faith.

** St. Athanasios the Great was at first a Deacon of Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria, becoming Patriarch after the latter's death. He took part in the First Œcumenical Synod and combatted Arios and his heresy with exceptional eloquence and ingenious arguments from Holy Scripture. He wrote many books against this heresy, the most important of which are the *Apology against the Arians* and the *History of the Arians*. It is probable that one of these books was read to the Arians who came to Abba Sisoes.

*** This man, who had been made a Bishop against his will, since he preferred the monastic way of life, adhered, in the case of the Steward, more to the conduct of monastics, whose rule requires that they not get angry at or rebuke anyone. He was, thus, not fulfilling the duties of a Bishop, which demanded that he rebuke and punish the evil Steward.

**** St. Paul was called a "Chosen Vessel" because he followed Christ, not after being taught by man, but in the wake of a call from the Lord Himself, Who appeared to him in a vision on the road to Damascus.

***** The ancient Greeks had, apart from their familiar twelve deities, many other minor ones, who were personifications of various forces or passions. Thus, the passion of strife was personified in the goddess Eris, that of vengeance in Nemesis or the Erinyes [the "Furies" in Roman mythology—*Trans.*], etc.

• Ares was the god of war.

•• Hermes was the god of commerce, and for this reason he was also called Kerdoos [from the Greek verb for "gain" or "earn"—*Trans.*].

••• He means the Old Testament book, the Proverbs of Solomon.

Hypothesis XXXVI

For those who desire perfection, if their hearts are in any way stirred up against one who wrongs or insults them, let this not be deemed exempt from reproach.

A. From the Life of St. Pachomios

When Pachomios' brother in the flesh, John, heard about the Saint's reputation, he went to the region where he lived and sought him out. When Pachomios saw John, he kissed him and rejoiced greatly; for, ever since he had been baptized, had joined himself to Christ, and had chosen the monastic life, Pachomios had never visited his relatives. Since John had the same goal as Pachomios, the two of them remained together, studying the law of God and taking no thought for earthly things.

Pachomios then remembered the promise which God had given him, through the Angel, regarding the countless souls who would be saved through him. Together with his brother, he immediately began to build a larger monastery, in order to receive those who wanted to renounce the world and dedicate themselves to God.

While they were building, Pachomios, in accordance with his purpose, wanted to construct a large monastery, and for this reason he made the surrounding wall larger. But John, whose aim was to pursue the anchoritic life, wanted the residence to be smaller. Thus, since he was older, he told Pachomios indignantly: "Stop being prideful and giving yourself airs."

On hearing these words, Pachomios was angry for a moment, because he had been insulted for no reason. However, he did not contradict his brother at all, but—meek as he was—restrained himself. The following night, he went down into the basement which he had built in one part of the dwelling and began to weep inconsolably and confess to God: "Woe is me, for the mind of the flesh is still in me, and I am behaving like all other men. I have undertaken such great asceticism, and yet I am seized once again by anger. Have mercy on me, O Lord, lest I perish; for if Thou dost not uphold me by Thy forbearance, and the Enemy finds some portion of his works in me, I will be in subjection to

him, as Holy Scripture says: 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all' (St. James 2:10). I believe that Thy many mercies, O Lord, will help me and that I shall be taught to traverse the way of Thy Saints, 'reaching forth unto those things which are before, and forgetting those things which are behind' (Philippians 3:13). From of old, Thy Saints have put the Enemy to shame, because they were aided by Thy Grace, and so they became shining lights. But as for me, O Lord, how shall I instruct those whom Thou hast promised to call, through me, to the monastic life, if I do not first overcome the passions which fight against the soul by means of the flesh and if I do not keep Thy law irreproachably? But I believe, O Lord, that as long as I have Thy help, Thou wilt forgive all of my sins."

Thus did he confess with tears, and he did not cease weeping all night, until it was morning. From his great perspiration (for it was summer and the place was very hot), the ground beneath the soles of his feet became like mud, since he was accustomed to standing upright in prayer, stretching out his hands and not lowering them at all, as if he were being crucified, and, by exhausting his body, to keeping his soul alert. Such was the character of St. Pachomios, and for this reason he lived with his brother in meekness and peace.

B. From Abba Cassian

If we wish to acquire perfect meekness and be vouchsafed the Lord's blessing (St. Matthew 5:5), we ought to rid ourselves not only of outward anger, but also of inward agitation. For restraining our mouth at a time of anger and not uttering furious words is not as beneficial as cleansing our heart from the remembrance of wrongs and refraining from turning over in our mind evil thoughts against our brother. The teaching of the Gospels exhorts us to cut out the roots rather than the fruits.

For, when the root of anger has been excised from the heart, neither hatred nor envy can be acted out. Moreover, he who hates his brother is called a murderer, because he slays his brother by the attitude of hatred that he maintains in his mind (I St. John 3:15). People do not see the blood of one's victim, since it was not shed by a sword, but God sees the inner impulse of the heart, which slew him spiritually. God recompenses men with crowns or chastisements not only for their deeds, but also for their thoughts and choices, as He Himself declares through the mouth of the Prophet: "I am going to gather their deeds, and thoughts, and me-

mories" (*cf.* Isaiah 66:18). We are told of this by the Apostle also, who says: "...Their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men" (Romans 2:15-16).

Hypothesis XXXVII

A brother must be forbearing towards those who grieve him and must not take vengeance on those who wrong him.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. It was said of Abba Isidore, the Presbyter of Sketis, that if anyone had a brother who was sick, lazy, or insolent and wanted to expel him from his cell, he would tell the grievant: "Bring him here to me." He would receive such a brother and save him by his forbearance. In Church, he would always say to the brothers: "Brothers, forgive and you will be forgiven."

2. Several Fathers have recounted the following story about a great Elder. If anyone came to ask him about some matter, he would typically respond: "Behold! You tell me to play the part of God and sit on His Judgment Seat; so, what would you have me to do for you? If you should say, 'Have mercy on me,' God will tell you, 'Have mercy also on your brother.' If, again, you say to Him, 'Forgive me,' He will reply to you, 'Forgive your neighbor, too.' Can it be that God is unjust? Perish the thought! It is up to us whether we wish to be saved."

3. A certain brother, who had been wronged by another, went to Abba Sisoes and said to him: "I have been wronged by a certain brother, and I want satisfaction." The Elder pleaded with him, saying: "No, my child, it is better for you to leave vengeance to God." But the brother insisted: "I will not rest until I have avenged myself." "Let us pray, brother," the Elder suggested.

After they had stood up and were praying, the Elder said: "My God, we no longer need Thee to take care of us, because we are taking vengeance by ourselves." On hearing this, the brother fell at the Elder's feet and said to him: "I no longer have any case against my brother; forgive me, Abba."

4. Another brother, from Libya,* went to Abba Silouan on Mount Panepho** and said to him: "Abba, I have an enemy who has done me

many evils. When I was still in the world, he seized my land, and he has frequently plotted to harm me; and now, he has incited poisoners to kill me. I want to hand him over to the magistrate to be punished." "My child, do whatever will give you peace," replied the Elder. "If he is punished, Abba, his soul will greatly benefit thereby," the brother added. "Do whatever you think, my child," the Elder said again. "Arise, Father, let us offer a prayer, and I will then go to the magistrate."

After they had stood up and were praying, when they came to the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," the Elder said: "And forgive us not our debts, as we forgive not our debtors." The brother said: "That is not how it goes, Father." "Yes it is, my child" answered the Elder. "If you really want to go to the magistrate to avenge yourself, Silouan has no other prayer to offer you." After this, the brother made a prostration and forgave his enemy.

5. Someone saw a diligent struggler lifting a corpse onto a pallet and said to him: "So, you are bearing the dead? Go and sustain the living."

6. Several brothers went to visit a holy Elder who lived in the desert. Outside his cell, they found some boys grazing their animals and uttering indecent words. After confessing their thoughts to the Elder and deriving benefit from his knowledge, they asked him: "How do you put up with these boys, Abba? Why do you not order them to refrain from using bad language?"

"Brothers," the Abba replied to them, "there are days when I want to tell them off, but I immediately chide myself and say: 'If I cannot put up with this small vexation, how will I endure if a great trial is unleashed against me?' This is why I do not say anything to them, so as to be able to withstand whatever comes my way."

7. An Elder lived with a boy. On one occasion, he saw the boy doing something that was not to his benefit and told him one time: "Do not do this again." But the boy did not listen to him; so, the Elder became indifferent and let him take responsibility for his sin. One day, the boy locked the cell in which they kept their loaves of bread and went away for thirteen days. The Elder remained without food during this period. A neighbor of his realized that the youth was slow in returning and that the Elder had nothing to eat. Thereupon, he cooked a little food and passed it to the Elder through a hole in the wall, urging him to eat it. He

remarked to the Elder: "The brother is slow in returning." And the Elder answered: "He will come when he has an opportunity."

8. A brother said to an Elder: "I want to become a Martyr for God." The Elder replied to him: "If one puts up with his neighbor in a difficult situation, this is equivalent to the martyrdom of the Three Youths in the furnace."

9. An Elder said: "If you and another person exchange bitter words between yourselves, and the other person denies having said these words, do not goad him on by saying: 'You said them.' For he can turn around and reply: 'Yes, I did; and what of it?' This gives rise to great exasperation. Let the matter drop and great peace will prevail."

B. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

It is said of St. James, the brother of St. John the Theologian, that when the man who had denounced him as a Christian saw the Saint being led to his death, he repented and fell at his feet, saying: "Forgive me." St. James paused briefly, kissed him, and said: "Peace to you."*** Thereupon, the accuser of St. James confessed with a loud voice that he, too, was a Christian. He was condemned along with the one whom he had denounced as a Christian and together with him received the reward of the Heavenly calling.

C. From Abba Isaiah

Brother, if you hear that some evil has been done to you by someone, be sure to oppose your good will to the evil, lest in your heart you requite the one who has grieved you, or reproach him, or condemn him, or slander him, thereby delivering him to the slandering mouths of others. If you have the fear of Hell inside you, it will overcome the thought that wants to take vengeance on your neighbor. This fear will whisper to you: "Wretched man, you beseech God on account of your sins, and God has been patient with you up until this day, without revealing them. So how do you dare, full of wrath towards your neighbor, to throw him to the slandering mouths of men? If you do this, God will not forgive you your sins, but will make them known before the whole of creation."

If your heart is softened by this thought and you guard yourself from taking vengeance on your neighbor, you will have mercy from God. But if your heart, in its wickedness, is hardened against your neighbor, know that you have not yet reflected on your sins before God, but are faint-hearted and persist in retaining sins within yourself, not having received any forgiveness.

Let us not be angry with our neighbors over words spoken by foolish people without their intending it, but spoken under the influence of Satan, who arouses our members (our neighbors) against us so that we may hate them and become his pawns. Let us heed the holy commandments of our Savior and let us cut off our will; for, if we love only those who honor us or obey us, what more are we doing than the idolater? If we pray only for our benefactors, we resemble the publican, who does the same thing. If we rejoice only with him who praises us, we do not differ from the sinner, who does the same thing. If we hate him who wrongs us, or disobeys us, or hates us, then we are like the Jews.****

What more are you doing, you who have been baptized into Christ and His death and who hereafter ought to live, not for yourself, but for Him Who died and rose for you? Examine yourself carefully as to whether you are following in His footsteps. He is sinless and shows Himself to be a model for you in every way. He lived in poverty, but you cannot endure poverty at all. He did not have any place to lay His head, but you do not endure solitude with joy. He put up with insults, whereas you cannot tolerate even one insult. He did not take revenge, but you are not at peace unless you have paid back the evil that others have done to you. He did not get angry even when He was suffering, whereas you get angry even when you cause distress to others. He remained undisturbed when He was being reviled, but you get upset even without being reviled. He counselled with humility all who sinned against Him, but you smite with words even those who love you. He joyfully endured all that happened to Him, but you become irritated when you hear of even the slightest thing that causes grief. He was gentle towards those who fell into sins, whereas you behave arrogantly even towards those more worthy than you. He gave Himself for the sake of those who sinned against Him, even to the point of delivering them from sin, whereas you cannot sacrifice yourself even for the sake of those who love you.

Behold what He gave you and what you give Him in return. Get to know Him from His deeds and yourself from your own deeds. If, therefore, you have died with Him in Divine Baptism (Romans 6:3), why do

you commit these sins? How will you be able to look at Him on the day of His glory, when He will be made manifest in Heaven and the entire human race will see Him in His great glory, bearing on Himself the marks of the sufferings which He underwent for our sake (Hebrews 2:9-10)? Will you appear having none of these sufferings on your body? He will say to you without fail: "I do not know you." Then you will see all of the Saints who have died for His Name wearing His mark, and thus you will be ashamed before them all.

Study the life of each of the Saints and you will find that they all endured evils, but without avenging themselves: namely, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Martyrs, and the rest of the Saints, whose blood cries out: "Avenge us on them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 6:10). For all of them, though they suffered, were forbearing, without returning evil to anyone and without becoming angry; and although they were murdered, or stoned to death, or burned, or drowned, or chopped into small pieces, they were long-suffering towards their tormentors and prayed for them, that they might be forgiven, knowing that they were not acting according to their natural will but under the pressure of injustice, which is of the Devil, by which they were darkened and forced to do these things against the Saints.

Examine yourself, my beloved, whether you are such in the sight of God, because you cannot hide anything at that hour: one will not be able to speak as he wishes, but each man's deeds, whatever they may be, will speak for themselves. When the Resurrection takes place, each man will be resurrected and will be clothed in his own deeds, be they wicked or virtuous. It is these that will do the talking, and each deed will know which place is suitable thereto.

Blessed is he who has struggled and who has cast off the garments which drag him down to Gehenna and put on those that lead him into the Kingdom of Heaven. For the Apostle says: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

D. From Abba Mark

A learned lawyer once asked an ascetic Elder: "Please enlighten me, for I wish to learn what you monks have in mind when you say that we should not judge those who wrong us." The Elder answered: "Not to wrong those who wrong us is a commandment of God, Who said

through the Prophet, 'Mine is the vengeance, and I will avenge thee, saith the Lord' (*cf.* Jeremiah 28:36), and in the Gospels: 'Forgive and ye shall be forgiven' (*cf.* St. Matthew 6:14-15). He enjoins this in many other passages of Holy Scripture. Who, then, is there who has appointed more just laws than these and who wishes, in advance, to judge those who wrong him, as if he were sinless?"

The learned man asked again: "Are magistrates, therefore, sinning when they punish malefactors and give just compensation to those who have been wronged?" The Elder replied: "It is not judges who sin when they punish malefactors, but those who deliver them to judges and do not leave them to the judgment of God. In the first place, because everything that happens to them is a chastisement to lead them to repentance and not an occasion for them to seek vengeance; and in the second place, even if they have been unjustly wronged, they ought to forgive the one who has wronged them, in accordance with the Lord's injunction, so that they themselves may be forgiven and not render their own sins unforgivable through human vengeance.

"Magistrates, according to the Apostle, 'are not a terror to good works, but to the evil' (Romans 13:3), for they do not compel the faithful and pious to accuse those who have wronged them; nor do they denounce those who are forbearing because, although they have been wronged, they do not take recourse in courts of law. Rather, magistrates only provide satisfaction to those who desire it. Those who are forbearing, for God's sake, they recognize as more prudent, and they honor them. Just as they do not compel those who do not desire it to have recourse to law courts, so also they do not sin when they punish those whom others accuse in order to receive justice.

"For this reason, it is necessary, O most wise one, after we have learned the ways and laws of the secular world, to learn also the spiritual law: to endure whatever afflictions befall us as our own and not to take vengeance on those who bring afflictions upon us, but to love them and apply the law of love to them. For, love, according to Holy Scripture, 'thinketh no evil, ...but beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things' (I Corinthians 13:5, 7). In so doing, love is incapable of condemning him whom it supposes to have wronged it. Each of us differs from the other in terms of his capacity for love; however, all of us fall short of its true value, expecting to make up for our deficits only by the Grace of God, if, indeed, we are not negligent in performing the spiritual labor that is within our grasp.

"This is why people who are educated by the standards of the world think that only wrongdoers commit sins. But those who are educated spiritually regard themselves as culpable—even if they should suffer wrong—when they do not endure injustices with gratitude; and not only on this account, but also because their afflictions derive from their previous sins, even if one sin is less serious than another. For one who avenges himself appears to be accusing God of not judging correctly, whereas he who endures whatever affliction befalls him as his own admits his responsibility and for this reason puts up with his sufferings. He who is wronged by men escapes sin, and God helps him in proportion to his affliction.

"He who believes in Christ, that He will give him just recompense, endures every injustice in proportion to his faith. He who prays wholeheartedly for the people who wrong him throws the demons into utter confusion, whereas he who opposes the former (those who wrong him) is wounded by the latter (the demons). It is better for one to endure evil from men than from demons, and he who is well-pleasing to the Lord has overcome both evildoers and demons. He who gets angry at his neighbor over money, or glory, or pleasure does not understand that God governs human affairs with justice. Do not desire to hear about the misfortunes of your enemies; for those who gladly hear such news reap the fruits of their own spiritual disposition.*****

"We cannot forgive another's sins from our hearts without true knowledge; for to one who has acquired it, true knowledge presents the afflictions that come upon him as his own. He who is wronged by someone and does not quarrel with that person, either verbally or even in thought, has acquired true knowledge and displays true faith in the Lord. Human beings are incapable of judging correctly what is just or what is unjust; for since God renders what is just to everyone, neither is the one who does wrong at an advantage nor the one who suffers wrong at a disadvantage. This being so, a man who ignores these things is walking in a fantasy world and gets upset for no good reason. A compassionate heart will find compassion and a merciful heart, likewise, will find mercy; the opposites of these will yield the corresponding results."

E. From St. Diadochos•

I have heard a number of pious people say that we should not allow anyone at all to plunder what we possess for our maintenance or for

helping the poor—and especially if we suffer such things from Christians—lest we become, through our forbearance, the cause of sin for those who wrong us. All this means is that we are invoking a perverse pretext for wanting to keep our possessions for ourselves. For if I cease blessing (St. Luke 6:28) and attending to my heart, I will want to conduct lawsuits against those who cause me concern and I will gradually begin to frequent the vestibules of the law courts; that is to say, I will come to the point of thinking that legal issues are more important than my salvation, to say nothing of the commandment of the Savior (to love one's enemies) (St. Luke 6:27).

How, in that case, will it be possible for me to follow the Gospel commandment which enjoins that "of him that taketh away thy goods [thou shouldest] ask them not again" (St. Luke 6:30), if I do not joyfully put up with the unjust seizure or theft of my belongings, as the Apostle tells us (Hebrews 10:34)? Moreover, even if one takes the guilty party to court and recovers what he has lost, he does not free the thief from his responsibility for the sin in question. For the perishable and transitory law courts of this world cannot prescribe the sentence issued by the imperishable and eternal tribunal of God. One who is accused can prove his innocence in terms of the laws, and after he has defended himself before them, exonerate himself of the accusation. Hence, it is good for us to put up with oppression on the part of those who wish to wrong us and to pray for them, that they may be delivered from the charge of cupidity, not through the restitution of those things which they snatched from us, but through repentance. This is what the justice of the Lord desires; not that we should receive back what was acquired unjustly, but that we should receive back the greedy man freed from his sin through repentance.

F. From Abba Isaac

He who says that he has abandoned the world and yet fights with people over something, lest he should be deprived of some comfort, is completely blind; for although he has voluntarily forsaken his whole body, he struggles and fights over one of its single members. Know that to forgive your debtors their sins is one of the works of righteousness; then you will see tranquillity shining with radiance in your mind. When you raise yourself upon the path of righteousness, then you will be delivered from all things. Those for whom the world has died accept insults with joy; but those for whom the world is still alive cannot tolerate

injustice, but, overcome by vainglory, are angered and agitated or succumb to grief.

Oh, how difficult it is for one to attain this virtue, that is, to endure injustice with forbearance, and how much glory those who do attain it acquire from God! He who wishes to attain it must first distance himself from his family and become a stranger, because he cannot achieve it in his homeland. Only the great and mighty, and those for whom this world has completely died and for whom every hope of worldly consolation has been lost and trampled underfoot, can endure this pain among their kinsfolk.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. The Blessed Zosimas once recounted the following: "When I was with the Blessed Dionysia, a certain brother asked her for alms, and she gave him whatever she could. But he, not receiving as much as he was asking for, began to insult her and make improper remarks against her and against me. When Dionysia heard these words, she was pained in her soul and sought to avenge us. As soon as I learnt of this, I said to her: 'What are you doing? Are you thinking to harm *yourself*? You are stripping your soul of every virtue. Are your sufferings really on a par with the sufferings which Christ endured for your sake? I know, my lady, that you scatter money like dung; but if you do not acquire meekness, you will be like a blacksmith who beats a lump of iron without fashioning it into a vessel.'"

The Blessed Zosimas also said to her: "St. Ignatios the God-bearer says: 'I have need of meekness, by which all the power of the prince of this world is brought to nought' [*Epistle to the Trallians*, IV, 2—*Editors*]. Not becoming upset is a sign that you have disdain for the world. That is, there are instances in which one may scorn many *centenaria*•• and yet stoop to worrying about a needle—one's preoccupation with the latter agitates him and he makes that needle a substitute for money. In this way, he becomes the slave of a needle, or a monastic head-covering, or a handkerchief, or a book, and ceases to be a servant of God. A certain sage put it well when he said that the soul has as many masters as it has passions. And the Apostle says: 'Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage' (II St. Peter 2:19). On hearing this, Dionysia repented and said to me: 'May you find God, for Whom you long.'"

2. Again, the Blessed Elder said: "God's commandments are truly very light, but our evil wills make them appear heavy. If the soul holds onto its volitions, it cannot fulfill the commandments; but if it lets go of them, it finds the commandments easy to fulfill, having not the slightest weight. There is something incongruous about forsaking attachment to the things of this world, only again to come into conflict with people over them. One should find his riches in God and hope in Him alone, for He created us and cares for us; and one should desire His Kingdom. This does not present even a single difficulty.

"We are accustomed, whether from fear of shipwreck at sea, or when faced with being attacked by pirates, to forsaking all of our possessions and throwing things overboard without any hesitation, in order to save our brief lives, which will shortly be dissolved, against our will, by death. And thus, so as not to be deprived of this temporal life, we forsake everything in a moment and count ourselves fortunate, even if we lose everything and are yet preserved from pirates or the surge of the sea. He who, a short while ago, acted like a lunatic and fought desperately to gain a nickel, when he falls into some such danger eagerly throws everything away in order to preserve this transitory life.

"Why, therefore, do we not think in the same way about eternal life, and why do we have the attitude and the disposition that we do? Why do we not boldly disdain and throw away all of the temporary things of this life, lest we forfeit eternal life? Why is our fear of the Lord not as strong as our fear of men or the danger posed by the waves of the sea?"

To confirm all that he had said, he related the following story, which he had heard from others.

3. "Once upon a time, there was a craftsman who worked with precious stones—a gem-engraver, as such people are normally called. He took precious stones and pearls and, together with his sons, embarked on a boat, wishing to journey to another place and do business there. During the voyage, he became acquainted with the youngest sailor on the boat and made friends with him. This young man served him and ate with him at his table. One day, the young man heard the other sailors whispering to each other and plotting to throw the gem-engraver into the sea and to grab his precious stones and everything that he was carrying on his person; and as a result of this, he became very sorrowful.

"When the young man came to perform his customary services, the merchant saw that he was very downcast and gloomy and demanded to know the reason for his sadness. He did not say anything initially,

but held the knowledge that he had acquired for a later occasion. However, when the merchant insisted on finding out why the young man was so dejected, he groaned and tearfully related to the merchant the plan which he had discovered the sailors devising against him. After pondering in silence for a little while, the merchant called his sons and instructed them to do without hesitation whatever he commanded them.

"At once, he spread out a sheet and ordered them to bring the chests containing the precious stones and pearls. As soon as they had brought them, he opened them up and took out all of the pearls and precious stones, threw them onto the sheet, and then said: 'Is it for these things that I am taking the risk of drowning at sea, clinging to a life so filled with anguish? Yet when, after a short time, I die, I will leave them behind in this world, taking nothing with me. So throw them all into the sea!' And immediately, together with his sons, he took the sheet and cast the gemstones into the open sea. When the sailors saw this, they were astounded and did not carry out the plan that they had hatched against him.

"Let us bring to mind clearly, brethren, how the merchant immediately abandoned his attachment to wealth when his thoughts prompted him—even though he was a layman living in the world—and how he became a philosopher in his deeds and words, and this in order to preserve this brief and transitory life. As for us, should we not, for the sake of Christ's commandment and the Kingdom of Heaven, undergo a small loss and endure it without sorrow?

"If we should be sorry at all, let us grieve over the spiritual perdition of one who has harmed us and not over being deprived of money; for it is not we who have suffered evil, but he, since by virtue of the injustice that he has committed, he has been expelled from the Kingdom of Heaven. 'The unrighteous,' Holy Scripture says, 'shall not inherit the Kingdom of God' (I Corinthians 6:9). By the temporal loss that someone has caused us, he has become the occasion for us to inherit eternal life. For Scripture says: 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven' (St. Matthew 5:12).

"But we do the opposite. We have abandoned grieving over the spiritual perdition of a member of the Body of Christ, and we sit and entertain various thoughts against our brother for the sake of things that are corruptible, insignificant, and worthless. For God made us, by faith, members of the Body which has Christ as its Head, as the Apostle says:

'All the members of that one body, being many, are one body, and Christ is the Head of all' (I Corinthians 12:12).

"And so, when your brother distresses you, you should think that your hand, or your eye, or another of your members is suffering and distressing you: 'Whether one member suffer,' Holy Scripture says, 'all the members suffer with it' (I Corinthians 12:26). Exactly the same thing happens to our bodies: if one of our members is ailing, it passes on the pain by virtue of the connection that exists (between it and the rest of the body); yet, we do not remove it, nor do we cut it off, in order to avoid the pain. On the contrary, in fact, we consider it a very great loss if we are unwillingly deprived of one of our members. We suffer along with the diseased member, and we endeavor in every way to heal it. We place the precious seal of Christ on it, we anoint it with holy oil, we show it to doctors, and we apply everything that is necessary for the suffering member to be healed.

"Just as we wait for the ailing member to be healed and no longer to transmit its affliction to us, so also should we think and act in the case of our brothers. If one of them ever wrongs us, or somehow or other grieves us, under the influence of our common adversary—by God's leave, to test us, or to correct some passion of ours—we ought to be upset, not over losing money or over the wrong that we have suffered, but over our brother who has wronged us—or, rather, who has done himself great harm, as I said before, and has pitifully fallen away from the Kingdom of Heaven. On this account should we grieve and lament and fervently beseech God for him, that in His love for mankind He might forgive the brother his sins.

"When we act in this way, we will truly be imitators of Christ, Who prayed for those who crucified Him and besought His Heavenly Father to forgive them; and in this regard He became, for us, a model of forbearance. In emulation of Him, therefore, let us forgive our brothers the sins that they have committed against us, so that He, too, may forgive our faults (St. Matthew 6:12) and thus make us partakers and heirs of His glory."

4. The same Elder related that he once ordered some books from an expert calligrapher.••• "After finishing them, he sent a message notifying me of this. 'I have finished them,' he told me. 'Send me what you see fit and take them.' A certain brother, on learning of this, went [secretly] in my place to the calligrapher and, having given him his payment, took the books. Without knowing what had happened, I sent

another brother from my *synodeia* with a letter and the payment, so that he might collect the books.

"When the brother arrived and the calligrapher realized that he had been duped by the one who had already taken the books, he became upset and said: 'I will go myself and punish him on these two counts: that he made a fool of me and that he took things that did not belong to him.' When informed of his plan, I sent the following message to him: 'Brother, you are aware that we acquire books for precisely this reason: to learn from them love, humility, and meekness. However, if strife is behind our acquisition of books, I do not want to acquire them, if only so that I may not get involved in a quarrel; for 'the servant of the Lord must not strive' (II St. Timothy 2:24)."

5. Some brigands once went to attack a certain Hesychast. Perceiving beforehand that they were going to attack him, he cried out for help. The neighbors heard his cries, came out, apprehended the brigands, and sent them to the magistrate, who immediately threw them into jail. But when the brothers were informed of this, they were distressed and said: "They were imprisoned because of us." They arose and went to Abba Poimen and related the matter to him. He at once wrote to the ascetic: "Consider the source of the first betrayal and you will see the source of the second; that is, if you had not first become a traitor inwardly—in other words, if you had not become frightened from a lack of faith—you would not have committed the second betrayal, that is, of handing the brigands over to the magistrate."

When the ascetic had read Abba Poimen's letter, he arose, went to the city (although he had never gone out of his cell), and got the brigands out of jail. He was renowned throughout that region, so they were released immediately, with the aid of the authorities.

H. From St. Ephraim

If you lend something to your brother and he is slow in returning it to you, and you want to remind him of this, tell him once; for people are often forgetful.

If you borrow something from another and he, out of respect, does not remind you of it, on your part, in this instance, do not, fearing God, wilfully deprive him of it; for it is written: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

* That is, he hailed from Libya, from the region of North Africa.

** See endnotes for Hypothesis I, above—*Trans.*

*** See endnotes for Hypothesis XXIX, above—*Trans.*

**** These final words are said about the Jews because the Mosaic Law imposed on a criminal a penalty that was identical to the evil that he had done. The expression "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Exodus 21:24) is, in fact, legend to this day. That is to say, if someone was responsible for a man being blinded, the penalty imposed on him was that his eye was gouged out, etc. However, the Lord censured all of these ideas in His Sermon on the Mount, thereby fulfilling the Mosaic Law, or, rather, perfecting it to the highest degree, such that it became incapable of any improvement.

***** With these words, St. Mark teaches us that as long as we hear with gladness and satisfaction of the misfortunes suffered by our enemies, which is a great sin, for this reason there will come a time when we will reap the fruits of our inclination towards remembering wrongs and harboring feelings of envy.

• The Greek text of *The Evergetinos* wrongly attributes this passage to St. Gregory the Dialogist—*Editors.*

•• The *centenarius* was a coin, the value of which varied from place to place and according to the metal from which it was manufactured (that is, the gold centenarius had one value, the silver another, etc.).

••• In that period, books were all handwritten. There were, therefore, special copyists, calligraphers [literally, "good writers "—*Trans.*] whose script could be easily read, who undertook the task of copying for a satisfactory payment.

Hypothesis XXXVIII

A Christian must not only avoid defending himself against those who wrong him, but must endure injustice with long-suffering and shame them by his forbearance.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

In the monastery of St. Honoratus, there lived a very pious man, Libertinus, who served as Prior to St. Honoratus and whose disciple he was. One day, Count Darida of the Goths,* with a large army, encountered the servant of God. Some of Darida's men took Libertinus down from the horse on which he was riding and stole it from him. The latter eagerly accepted the loss resulting from the seizure of his horse; in fact, he gave them the riding crop that he was holding and said to them: "Take this, too, so that you may drive this animal forward." He then gave himself over to prayer. After galloping for some distance, the Goths reached the River Volturno.**

Each man then began to strike his horse with the sheath of his sword and to goad it with his spurs. The horses, when they struck them, endeavored to move, but were unable to do so. They were frightened of approaching the water of the river, as if it were a deadly precipice. After they grew tired of beating their horses, one of the Goths said: "We are suffering these things because of the evil that we did, on the way, to the servant of God." They at once turned back; they found Libertinus praying and said to him: "Take your horse." He replied to them: "Farewell. I have no need of the horse." Thereupon, after descending from their horses, they forcibly placed him on the horse from which they had taken him down a short while before, and immediately departed. They then returned to the river, which the horses previously could not even approach, and crossed it as easily as if it had no water at all.

One must marvel at the patience of the righteous one: how calmly he bore with the injustice and at how the just judgment of God put an end to the injustice and brought those who were rational back to their senses through irrational creatures; and, indeed, how God wondrously glorified His servant.

B. From the Life of St. Marcian

In the middle of the night, when he supposed it impossible for anyone to see him, the great Marcian was accustomed to going to a banker well known to him, in order to exchange gold coins for a large quantity of bronze coins, so that he might distribute them to the poor. He would return immediately thereafter. The banker, reckoning that the exchange was taking place at night, and that he was thus able to increase his profits, would weigh the gold coins on inaccurate scales. The Saint made no objection, nor was he at all concerned to reprove the banker; in this way, he acted as though he had complete confidence in the conscientiousness of the one who was weighing the money.

However, after this had happened many times, and Marcian pretended that he did not notice anything and did not censure the banker, the latter became puzzled; but when he reflected that it was the middle of the night, he had a better thought, and his suspicions came closer to the truth, since they were in harmony with Marcian's life. He instructed one of his servants to follow Marcian after leaving his workplace, in order to find out where the money was going. And so, the servant followed Marcian. When the holy man came across a beggar, who lay dead on a bed, he immediately took wine from a wineshop, as was his custom, washed the corpse with it, and wrapped it in a shroud. Thereupon, the corpse rose up, as we have noted elsewhere,*** and, after embracing him, became a corpse again; then, the Saint departed.

When he saw these things, the servant was terrified. He ran back as fast as he could to the one who had sent him and recounted everything to him in detail. The banker then repented for all that had happened and wept over the great wrong that he had done to the Saint; and he felt his conscience chastising him with remorse. For this reason, when the Saint came again to exchange gold coins, the banker fell at his feet, confessed to him the evils that he had committed, and returned to him all that he had taken from him by fraud.

Thus, one good deed, done in silence, can accomplish more than a multitude of words. Those who are not benefited from reproofs and exhortations are corrected by a single praiseworthy deed performed quietly and without ostentation, since it touches their conscience, corrects them, and makes them learn for themselves what is right. Yet, Marcian told the banker that he had not been wronged at all, and he waived the extra amount that he gave him. He also had no further dealings with the banker himself, not in order to avoid someone who was evil (since

he not only forgave him, but also said that he had the utmost affection for him), but in order to avoid being harmed in his soul by vainglory, since he did not, indeed, want his deeds to be made known to anyone, but rather to be stored up in God's treasuries.

C. From the Life of St. Spyridon

1. A certain man once visited St. Spyridon, in order to purchase a hundred goats from his herd. The Saint welcomed him and gave him leave first to put down the money, and then to take the animals. The buyer, however, paid for only ninety-nine goats and withheld the price of one goat, thinking to deceive the Saint, who was simple and guileless. When the two of them entered the pen, St. Spyridon told him to take as many goats as he had paid for; but the merchant, who did not catch even this hint, took a hundred goats out of the pen. Then one of the goats, as a good servant, realizing that its master had not sold it, returned to the pen. That shameless man led it out again, forcibly dragging it along. This curious phenomenon occurred two or three more times: the goat would return and the buyer would stubbornly and forcibly drag it out again.

Then what should happen? When he was unable to achieve anything by this tactic, the man seized the goat by its hind legs, threw it over his shoulders, and departed. The goat then bleated loudly and fiercely, butted the merchant with its horns, and bent itself round towards his head; in this way the animal clearly proclaimed that it was being taken by force and punished the greedy man, as it were, for his unjust deed. Those present were amazed at this strange occurrence, which they were unable to explain.

St. Spyridon, not wanting to chide the wrongdoer openly, said gently to him: "Look here, my child, perhaps the animal is not doing these things aimlessly, and perhaps it is not without good reason that it is indignant about being carried off. Have you perhaps forgotten to pay for it?" These words wounded the merchant in his heart. Remembering what he had done, he realized his mistake, confessed it immediately, and asked forgiveness. Afterwards, when he had paid for that same goat, it stopped bleating and resisting and calmly followed the other animals. St. Spyridon, unassuming as he was, and free from pride, looked after his diocese in a God-pleasing manner—and was no less solicitous even with animals.

St. Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythous

2. On one occasion, thieves came to the the goat pen late at night, in order to steal some animals. But God, Who cared for the pastor, was not indifferent to the animals that he grazed. Thus it was that those thieves found themselves invisibly constrained by unbreakable fetters—their hands were bound, and they were completely unable to leave.

At daybreak, St. Spyridon the Great, realizing what had happened, went over to the thieves. When he saw that their hands were tied behind their backs, he at once freed them from their bonds by his prayer. Then, after counselling them for some time about procuring life's necessities by honest labor, he finally gave them a ram, lest—as he told them jokingly—their vigil should have been in vain.

3. Someone else from Trimythous,**** a shipowner, needed money for trading purposes, and so he went to the Saint in order to obtain some from him. Along with the other commandments, the Saint used to carry out that which says: "From him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (St. Matthew 5:42). He readily gave this man the few gold coins that he had, which he kept for the needs of his diocese. The shipowner took the gold coins, and after a favorable voyage, from which he made a profit, returned. He visited the Saint in order to repay what he owed. The Saint, without asking any questions and without counting the money, as do most people, instructed the shipowner to get up and place the money in the box from which he had previously taken it.

Since he respected the kindness and guilelessness of his creditor—the Saint, that is—the shipowner put all the gold coins in the box, as the Saint had instructed him. And again, when he was in need, the shipowner took some money and, without any deception, put it back. This happened many times, until the merchant, overcome by the passion of avarice, developed an attitude of treachery and cunning towards the one who had shown so much confidence in him and perverted the truth. He used the Saint's generosity as an excuse for his mischief; thus, on one occasion, he pretended to put the money in the box, but closed it and departed, without leaving anything in it.

He spent the money which he ought to have returned on ventures that yielded no profit. When he needed money again, recalling the path that he had trodden previously, he went to the great Spyridon and asked him for the gold coins which he had not deposited, as if he had in fact deposited them. But the shipowner's knavery did not elude the Saint; as usual, he meekly bade him go to the box and take the money. The shipowner, as if he had not done anything evil or untoward, went to

take the money which he had supposedly deposited. But when he opened the box and found it empty—as he had, of course, left it—he reported this to the Saint with the thought of deceiving him. The Saint advised him to look more carefully, for, he told him, "Since the time that you put it in the box, no one else's hands have touched it." Once again, the shipowner pretended to search for it; but since what was not true could not be the case, he feigned ignorance and said that he had found absolutely nothing.

Then that good and gentle man, St. Spyridon, said to him: "My beloved, if you had really put the money in the box, you would have been able to find very easily what you deposited; however, if you are now seeking to receive from me what you kept in your hands, know that you are defrauding yourself, not me."

When the shipowner heard these words, unable to endure the reproach of his conscience, he immediately fell to the ground, grasped the Saint's feet, and begged forgiveness of him. The Saint forgave him more readily than he had asked for forgiveness and advised him not to covet, in the future, what belongs to others and not to sully his conscience with trickery and lies. "The result of such deeds," he added, "is not only not a profit, but a manifest loss."

D. From the Life of St. Evthymios the New of Madytos

1. Some sacrilegious people once bored a hole in the walls of the holy Church in which St. Evthymios carried out his duties, entered in the middle of the night, and stole the sacred treasures therein. In the morning, when the deed became known, the whole city was up in arms and the inhabitants began to search for the thieves. News of the incident spread everywhere; the thieves were arrested and found themselves in the hands of the citizens. The citizens sought to prosecute them with excessive severity and to impose harsh punishments on them.

When St. Evthymios perceived their intentions, he stepped into the midst and said to them: "It is not desirable, my children, that these vile malefactors be punished by another while I am present. I have more right than anyone else to be angry, since I am the one who suffered the loss. I will punish them ruthlessly and bring about their death in a short time from tortures, hunger, and thirst."

The citizens decided that the Saint was right in what he said; thus, after the people had dispersed, he took the thieves to his house. There, he offered them kind hospitality, gave them provisions for the future,

freed them from their bonds, and let them go wherever they wanted.

2. On another occasion, there was a full moon and a thin layer of darkness was spread over the earth. The renowned St. Evthymios had just sung his midnight hymns to God and was, as usual, going round the various Chapels. Suddenly he saw two men stealing wheat from the underground storehouses; one of them was removing wheat from the basement and putting it in sacks, while the other was taking it from above and transferring it to a niche where no one would notice it.

When this latter expert wheat thief realized that the Saint was passing by, he took to his heels and left his accomplice in the pit. Then the Divine Evthymios, thinking it a great evil to impede the poor from taking the wheat that they needed, and especially at a time when bread was as scarce as gold, decided to go to the one who remained and substitute for the one who had fled. The thief who remained, totally unaware of what had happened, continued to hand up the wheat; St. Evthymios took it from him and transferred it to the niche.

After this man had removed a sufficient quantity of wheat from the basement and wished to climb back up, St. Evthymios whispered in his ear: "Shall we depart and leave those cheeses behind?" At the same time, he indicated with his finger where the cheeses were! Still having no idea what was going on, out of fear the man asked: "How do you know this?" "I heard the Bishop mention it a little while ago," replied the Saint. The thief immediately searched the place and found the cheeses; he took whichever ones he wanted and put them into the hands of St. Evthymios. When he had finished, the Saint gave him his hand, and he climbed back up; but, on realizing who it was, the thief was overcome with fear and shame and, as if frozen from terror, fell at the Saint's feet and asked forgiveness.

But the Saint patted him kindly, raised him up from the ground, embraced him, and said to him: "Do not be upset, my child, as if you had done something terrible; for these things are yours and God's, and if you stole any of them, know that you have stolen from what is yours and not from someone else's. And if, in the future, you should want anything, come and take whatever you need."

The thief was consoled by these words and left, marvelling at the Saint's forbearance and compassion, and he did not cease relating to everyone what had happened to him. On account of his great virtue, St. Evthymios did not attach any importance to this act of mercy, because he was of the opinion that a true Christian should regard all material

goods as common to all people and should not have anything of his own ("neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common" [Acts 4:32]). This way of thinking was wrought in his soul by love and maintained by blessed humility, which led him to lay up treasure in purses that do not grow old (*cf.* St. Matthew 6:19-20).

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. A brother asked Abba Poimen: "What does it mean for one to get angry at his brother without a cause?" The Elder replied to him: "If you get angry over any ill-treatment that you suffer from your brother, you are angry without a cause; and even if he gouges out your right eye or cuts off your right hand, you should not be angry with him. If he separates you from God, only then should you be angry."

2. An Elder said: "He who willingly suffers injustice and forgives his neighbor is like Jesus; he who neither commits injustice, nor suffers it, is like Adam; and he who commits injustice, or demands interest, or mistreats someone else is like the Devil."

3. It was said of Abba Gelasios that he possessed a book worth eighteen *nomismata,****** for it contained the entire Old and New Testaments. This book was placed in the Church, so that any of the brothers who wanted might read it. On one occasion, a brother from another monastery visited the Elder and, when he saw the book, coveted it, stole it, and departed. The Elder, although he realized what the brother had done, did not pursue him. The thief went to the city and sought to sell the book; when he found a buyer, he asked sixteen *nomismata* for it. The man who wanted to buy it said to him: "Let me examine it and I will give you whatever you ask." On receiving the book, he took it to Abba Gelasios to examine, having told him the price that the seller was demanding.

After examining it carefully, as if he did not recognize it, the Elder said to the man: "Buy it, because it is beautiful and worth the price that he told you." When the buyer returned to the seller, he said something different from what the Elder had told him, for he said: "Look, I showed the book to Abba Gelasios, and he told me that you are asking a very high price for it and that it is not worth so much." When the latter heard this, he asked the buyer: "Did the Elder tell you anything else?" "No,"

the man replied. The seller was moved to compunction by the Elder's forbearance and said to the man: "I no longer want to sell it." After taking the book, he went in repentance to the Elder and begged him to accept it; but the Elder did not wish to keep it. The brother told him: "If you do not take it, I will have no peace." "If you will not be at peace," the Elder said to him, "I will take it back." This brother remained close to the Elder until his death, benefitting from the Elder's conduct.

4. Once, when Abba Evprepios was being burglarized, he himself assisted the thieves in removing his possessions. After the thieves had taken out whatever was in his cell, they left behind a staff belonging to one of their number. When he saw it, the Elder was upset; so he took it and ran after the thieves in order to give it to them. But they did not want to take it, since they were in a hurry to depart. The Elder then met some people who were travelling along the same road and gave them the staff to hand over to these robbers.

5. Three robbers once attacked Abba Theodore. Two of them held him, while the third carted his belongings outside. After the thief had removed everything, including the books, he wanted also to take the *rason* which the Elder used to wear for Divine Liturgy. He told them, "Leave that," but they refused. The Elder then moved his hands and threw the two of them down. When they saw this, the robbers were afraid. "Do not be frightened," the Elder told them. "Divide the items into four portions; you take three of them, and leave me one." He made this suggestion, so that he might take for his portion the *leviton*, namely, the *rason* which he wore for the Eucharist.

6. It was said of Abba John the Persian that, when malefactors once entered his cell, he put water in a basin and asked if he could wash their feet; shamed by this, they repented and departed.

7. One day, when he was returning to his cell, Abba Makarios found a man who had a beast of burden with him stealing his belongings. Then, as if he were a stranger, he helped the thief and loaded up the animal with him. He sent him on his way with great tranquility, saying: "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (I St. Timothy 6:7); "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

8. On another occasion, a thief entered the cell of Abba Makarios while he was absent. When the Elder returned, he found him stealing his possessions and loading them onto a camel. After going into his cell, he took some of his possessions and joined the thief in loading them onto the camel. When the thief had placed everything on the camel, he began to beat it so as to make it rise; but it did not get up.• On seeing this, Abba Makarios went into his cell and found a small hoe; he took it, placed it on the camel, and said to the thief: "Brother, this is what the camel wants." The Elder then prodded the camel with his foot and said to it: "Get up." The animal immediately arose and walked a short distance, in obedience to his words. But it sat down again, after taking a few steps, and did not get up until all of the items had been unloaded from it. The thief then left in shame, without taking anything.

9. Some thieves once went to the cell of an Elder and said to him: "We have come to take everything in your cell." "Take whatever you like, my sons," the Elder replied to them. They took everything that they found in his cell and departed; but they forgot a leather sack, which he had hanging there. The Elder took it and ran after the thieves. "Boys," he called out to them, "You left this in my cell. Take it, too." Astounded by the Elder's forbearance, they returned and put back in his cell all that they had removed from it. They repented, saying to one another: "Truly, this is a man of God."

10. It is said that certain philosophers•• once wished to test the monks. One of the monks, who was well-dressed, passed by, and they called out to him: "Hey you, come here!" He became angry and reviled them.

After him, another monk—from the Libyan desert—passed by, and they said to him: "Hey you, evil old monk, come here!" He eagerly went up to them. The philosophers then slapped him; the monk immediately turned the other cheek (St. Matthew 5:39). Amazed at this, the philosophers made a prostration to him and said: "Truly, here is a monk!" After putting him in the middle of their company, they began to ask him: "Father, what more do you do in the desert than we do? Do you fast? We also fast. Do you keep vigil? We also keep vigil. Whatever else you do, we also do. What more, then, do you do by living in the desert?" The Elder replied to them: "We hope in God's Grace and keep watch over our minds." They said to him: "This we cannot do." Edified by their conversation with the monk, they let him go.

11. In one place there lived two monks; a certain Elder visited them in order to test them. He grabbed a stick and began to smash the vegetables in the garden of one of them. When the brother saw him, he hid until the Elder had destroyed everything. Only one root remained intact, and the monk said to the Elder: "Abba, if you wish, leave it so that I can cook it and we can eat it together." The Elder then made a prostration to the brother and said to him: "Brother, the Holy Spirit rests on you because of your forbearance."

12. The Blessed Zosimas related the following about a certain Elder: "When I was still living at the monastery in Tyre,••• a certain virtuous Elder visited us. While we were reading the sayings of the Elders, as was our custom, we reached the story of that Elder into whose cell thieves came, took all of his belongings, and departed, leaving behind only a leather sack. The Elder took it, ran after the thieves, and called out to them, 'Boys, you left this in my cell; take it, too.' The thieves marvelled at the Elder's forbearance and put back in his cell all that they had taken.

"After we had finished reading this story, the visiting Elder told me: 'This story was of great benefit to me.' When I implored him to tell me what benefit he had derived from it, he answered: 'At one time, when I was living in the region near the Jordan, I too read this story. Marvelling at the Elder mentioned therein, on account of his forbearance and meekness, I said to God in my prayers: "O Lord, Who didst count me worthy to wear the *schema* of these holy Elders, vouchsafe me to follow in their footsteps and traverse the same road that they traversed, guided by Thy Grace."'

"'I made this request to God, and this desire remained with me. Two days went by. While sitting in my cell, I noticed that some people were approaching. In a few moments, they came to my door and knocked on it. I realized at once that they were thieves. "Glory to God," I told myself, "the time has come for my desire to bear fruit." Then I opened the door and let them in. I graciously lit a lamp and showed them whatever was in my cell. "Don't worry," I said to them, "I assure you before the Lord that I will not hide anything from you." "Do you have any money?" the thieves asked me. "Yes, I have three *nomismata*," I replied to them, and I opened the box in front of them. The thieves took the coins and all my belongings and departed peacefully.'

"I asked the Elder jokingly: 'What happened after that? Did they return, like the thieves mentioned in our story?' The Elder immediately

answered me: 'God forbid, for I did not even want them to return.'"

The Blessed Zosimas concluded, "Do you see to what progress and glory before God his longing and spiritual preparation brought him? Not only was he not upset over the loss of all his belongings, but he even experienced great joy, as if he had, in reality, been granted something of inestimable value."

13. Another Elder was in need of clothing. So he went to the marketplace and bought a coat worth one *nomisma* and a few *noumia.*•••• After receiving the garment from the salesman, he put it down and sat on it. Having given the salesman the money, he counted a few *noumia* on a small counter that was in the store. In the meantime, someone came up behind him and began gradually to tug at the coat, wishing to steal it from him without being noticed. When the Elder realized that someone was pulling on his coat, he stood up a little, supposedly in order to come closer to the place where he was counting the money, until the one who was tugging at the coat took it and left. Thus, although he had paid what the coat cost, the Elder departed without getting anything.

* The Goths were an ancient Germanic people, who, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., invaded Italy, which they subjugated almost entirely, expanding their power by occupying present-day France and Spain, as well.

** The Volturno is a river in Southern Italy, which originates from the Apennine Mountains and empties out into the Tyrrhenian Sea, north of Naples. One hundred seventy-five kilometers in length, it flows past the city of Capua.

*** For the very edifying life of St. Marcian, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. I, p. 212.

**** Trimythous is a city in Cyprus, of which, as is well known, St. Spyridon was Bishop.

***** The word "*nomisma*" means, in this context, the currency which had the greatest value in that period. In any case, since they were handwritten, books were extremely expensive at that time.

• Since the camel is a tall beast, camel-drivers have trained these animals to kneel, so as to enable them to load them. When the drivers have placed a suitable load on them, they pat them lightly and the camels get up.

•• "Philosophers," in this context, denotes educated idolaters, who were well versed in all of Hellenic wisdom.

••• Tyre was an ancient city in Syria, well-known in history from its siege and capture by Alexander the Great. It belongs, today, to the state of Lebanon, and is called Sur.

•••• The "*noumion*" was a unit of currency, the value of which differed according to place and time. In Roman and Byzantine times, it was of little value.

Hypothesis XXXIX

That to those who endure injustice with gratitude and do not avenge themselves, God becomes their avenger and recompenses them many times over for the wrongs which they have suffered.

A. From the Life of St. John the Merciful

The evil Devil envied the wondrous John for his propensity for generous almsgiving and put into the mind of Nicetas the patrician,* who was an intimate friend of the Saint, thoughts and words that were unworthy of his (Nicetas') virtue. When he visited the Blessed John, he said to him: "Master, the Emperor needs a great deal of money to cover the indispensable needs of the state, because he is constantly expending funds; you yourself can see how difficult things have become.** You must, therefore, hand over to the public treasury all the money that you spend without good reason and to no purpose."

When John heard this, without being in any way upset, he answered: "It is not right that we should hand over to the earthly king those things which are consecrated to the Heavenly King; for this is a fearful sacrilege and a very grave sin in the sight of God. If you believe that this is what you must do, look here are the Church's funds; take them all and do as you wish, as long as no thought deters you from this purpose. For my part, I am not going to hand over to you even a single penny of all that has been consecrated to God." Without any reservations, that admirable man—I know not why—summoned his attendants and ordered them to take the money, leaving the Patriarch only a hundred pounds of gold.***

On their departure, those who were carrying this money met some people who were going up to the Patriarch bearing jars of honey; some of these jars were labelled "first," and others "unsmoked."**** When the patrician saw them and read the labels, he immediately sent word to the Patriarch to have a jar of honey sent him. Meanwhile, the Patriarch, as was his custom, handed the jars over to someone to test the quality of the contents; and from this he ascertained the miracle that had occurred in the jars; that is, that they were full, not of honey, but of gold. He at once sent a jar of gold coins, labelled "first honey," to the

patrician.

Along with the jar he also sent a letter to the patrician, which read, in brief: "The Lord, Who said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' (Hebrews 13:5), because He is undeceitful, has now given us other money in place of that which Your Excellency stole; the jar which I am sending to you, and which is one of those that God sent to us, will reveal the miracle to you. Know, therefore, that no mortal man will ever shortchange God, Who gives sustenance and breath to all (Psalm 144:15-17; Isaiah 42:5-7)." He instructed those who were carrying the jar to open it before the patrician in the presence of witnesses and to tell him that all of the other jars that he had seen were likewise full of gold coins.

The Patriarch's envoys found Nicetas at table; they placed the letter in his hand and presented him with the jar. When he saw it, he said: "My Master must surely be angry with me, because otherwise he would not have sent me only one jar." The messengers who were carrying the jar, as they had been commanded, opened it before him and emptied out the money. They informed him that the other jars were likewise full of gold. When he read the statement in the letter, that it is impossible for a man to put God in a difficult position, he was thereby shamed and frightened (for a noble and virtue-loving soul quickly repents if it has done something bad), and he called out in front of everyone: "By the living Lord, never would humble Nicetas wish to attempt to shortchange God."

He arose forthwith and took all the money that he had stolen from the Church, and even the jar that had been sent to him, and after adding thereto three hundred pounds of his own gold, went to the Patriarch, gave it to him, and begged forgiveness for his thoughtlessness. The Patriarch welcomed him gladly, without either reproaching him or saying any bitter words to him; on the contrary, after fortifying him with words of consolation for his soul and with spiritual advice, he sent him on his way. From that time on, they became such close friends with each other that the Patriarch became godfather to his children.

B. From Abba Mark

He who is wronged by someone, and does not seek redress from the one who wronged him, *truly* believes in Christ in this instance; and receiving a hundredfold in this present life, such a one will inherit eternal life in the world to come (*cf.* St. Mark 10:30).

C. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Once upon a time, Abba Gelasios inherited from a certain Elder, who himself used to reside in Nicopolis,***** a cell and the field that surrounded it. However, a farmer in the service of the then ruler of Nicopolis, Vacatos, who was a relative of the deceased Elder, went to the ruler with the demand that he himself should receive the land, since it belonged to him according to the law.

Vacatos initially asked Abba Gelasios to surrender the land to the farmer; but since he could not persuade him to do this, because Abba Gelasios was reluctant, out of piety, to hand a monastic cell over to a layman, Vacatos tried to use force. One day, Vacatos was watching the animals which Gelasios rented in order to transport olives from the olive-trees in the field which he had inherited. When they had been loaded up, Vacatos forced them to go to his villa and, after taking possession of all the cargo, chased away the disburdened animals along with their drivers, whom he also insulted.

The Blessed Elder did not seek in any way to reclaim the produce, yet did not concede his ownership of the land, for the reason that we mentioned previously. Vacatos blazed with anger against the Elder and resolved to take him to court; so, when he had other necessary matters to settle, he set out for Constantinople. After he had travelled overland, he wanted to pay a brief visit to St. Symeon of the Mandra• and to take his blessing, as a provision for his journey; for, he had been informed about him and wanted to see him.

As Vacatos drew near, the Blessed Symeon saw him from atop of his pillar. "Where are you from and where are you going?" he asked him. Vacatos replied: "I am from Palestine and I am going to Constantinople." "And for what reason?" the Elder asked again. "I have much business to take care of, but I hope to return, by the prayers of Your Holiness, and to venerate your holy footsteps." The Saint then said to him sternly: "Why do you not admit, O hapless man, that you are going to Constantinople in order to take action against the man of God, but instead conceal your iniquity? Anyway, your journey will not be successful; neither will you see your house again. If you are willing to hear my advice, set out from here at once to go to meet the Elder, making a prostration for all that you have done to him—if, indeed, you manage to get there alive."

And, in truth, Vacatos was overcome by a fever; so, his attendants carried him on a litter.•• They made haste to reach Nicopolis; however,

when they arrived in Berytos,••• he died, without reaching Nicopolis or seeing his household, in accordance with the Saint's prophecy.

2. The Blessed Pior was working in someone's field as a harvester and, having finished his work, asked for his wages; but since his employer postponed paying him, he returned to his monastery. The following year, he was summoned again and went to the same field. He harvested and labored eagerly, without receiving anything from the owner of the field; and so, he returned to the monastery empty-handed. The same thing happened in the third year: he worked and departed, without receiving any pay.

But the Lord smote the owner's household with many calamities and sicknesses. He thus went around to the monasteries in person, with the wages that he owed in his hand, in search of the Elder. After finding him with great difficulty, he fell at his feet and begged his forgiveness. At the same time, he gave him the wages that corresponded to his three years of toil and said to him: "The Lord paid me back." However, the Blessed Pior refused to accept it. He allowed him only to give it to the Church by way of the Priest.

3. A brother fashioned a master key and opened the cell of an Elder, from which he had been stealing money. The Elder had written on a piece of paper: "Dear brother, whoever you may be, do me a favor and leave me half for my needs." After dividing the money into two portions, he put down the paper. But when this brother broke into the Elder's cell again, this time he tore up the paper and took all of the money.

After two years, the brother fell ill and was in danger of dying; his soul was greatly tormented and would not part from his body. He then sent for the Elder and called him to his side. "Say a prayer for me, Father," he told him, "for I was the one who stole your money." "Why didn't you say so sooner?" the Elder replied. After the Elder had said a prayer, the brother immediately gave up his spirit.

* This is certainly a reference to the Byzantine general Nicetas, son of the patrician Gregory and cousin of the Emperor Heraclios, who entrusted him with the administration of Egypt between 610 and 619, that is, in the same period in which John the Merciful was Patriarch of Alexandria.

** We should keep in mind that in this period, Emperor Heraclios had ascended to the throne of Byzantium, only to find the state in a miserable condition and the public treasury empty, while the Persians had occupied almost all of Asia Minor and the Holy Land, had seized the Precious Cross, and were threatening Constantinople itself. Her-

aclios began at once to prepare an expedition against the Persians. In order to save money, the then Patriarch of Constantinople, Sergios, allowed the Emperor to take all of the gold and silver offerings in the Churches and turn them into currency, making the following striking comment: "Take these things, O Emperor, for if the enemy is victorious, they will seize them. But if, with God's help, you are victorious, then our Churches will acquire more offerings, and more splendid ones."

*** Regarding the value of the "*litra*," see the endnotes for Hypothesis II, above—*Trans.*

**** The labels "first" and "unsmoked" indicated that some vessels contained the first honey that was harvested from the hive, while others contained honey that had been extracted without smoking out the bees.

***** This is a reference to the Nicopolis located in Palestine, which was also called "Emmaus."

• For the life of St. Symeon, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. V, p. 572.

•• The "litter" (*lecticium*) was a stretcher used by the ancient Romans, resembling a bed and, in some cases, covered. Litters were used originally for journeys, but later for promenades in cities, and the servants who carried them were called *lecticarii*.

••• Berytos was an ancient city in Syria, which survives to the present day as the capital of the state of Lebanon, and is better known by the name "Beirut." In antiquity, it was called Beroe, and it is believed to be the same city as Berothaï in Holy Scripture.

Hypothesis XL

That we must love our enemies, since they are very beneficial to us, and that we must do good to them and pray for their salvation.

A. From the Martyrdom of the Holy Martyr Menas and those with him.

St. Menas* spoke with great boldness about the power of Christ before the Eparch Hermogenes, who was sitting on his throne, at that time, in order to judge and punish him. St. Menas assured him that he could accomplish all things in the name of Christ; that simply by invoking His name, it was possible to heal grievous diseases, incurable sufferings, and all of the other maladies which God alone could heal. As witnesses to the truth of his statements, he produced the people who were in attendance. To this, the Eparch replied: "I will now demonstrate to you that you are talking nonsense and boasting in vain; for, when I cut off or burn one of your members, you who worship Christ will be unable to restore it. How will you then appear in the eyes of others, when you truly promise to give them what you cannot bestow on yourself?" "I pray, O Eparch," said the Saint, "that you will receive proof of Christ's power from me; for I am convinced that you will immediately relinquish the rank which you now hold and will yourself become one of those who have Christ for their leader."

Then the Eparch, in order to vent his anger and, as he hoped, to prove in front of everyone that all of the Saint's assertions were false, ordered that the skin on the soles of his feet, on which his whole body rested, be scraped off with a knife. In this way, he would be standing on bare bones when they asked him about the gods, so that from the severity of the pain that would smite his heart, he would easily be impeded and would not respond correctly to all of the questions which they would put to him.

While they were mercilessly cutting away his flesh with knives, and while the entire vein in the sole of each foot was being torn and the nerves which ensured movement were being cut out, the Saint groaned a little (as if Divine Grace were withdrawing in order to test the athlete and to provide him with opportunities to gain crowns, since crowns are

assuredly the fruits of toils), but exhibited patience in his dreadful sufferings. But when they released him from his torments, the Saint immediately leapt up and stood upright on the bones of his feet, chanting: "My foot hath stood in uprightness; in the congregations will I bless Thee, O Lord" (Psalm 25:12). An abundance of blood ran from his feet, but his face was shining and his soul flourished in the face of these perils.

On seeing this, all of the spectators applauded, as if it were a victory. The Eparch, wanting at the same time to escape the censure of the crowd for not accomplishing anything, yet also to disarm his opponent and render him impotent and easy to manipulate, ordered that the Martyr's tongue be severed from his throat. In reply, the Saint said: "Even if you were to extinguish the pupils of my eyes, not even then would I stumble; for 'the law' of Christ 'is a lamp unto my feet' (Psalm 118:105). I am confident in saying that when I lose my tongue, then you will acquire a sweet-sounding tongue with which to sing of God's mighty acts." This later came to pass, as the Saint had foretold. To cut a long story short, by the power of Christ, the Martyr's feet, eyes, and tongue were restored to him. When, on the following day, he entered the arena sound in limb, the Eparch himself became a believer and shared in the martyrdom of St. Menas.

B. From the Narrative of the Travels of St. Peter the Apostle, Composed by St. Clement.

I, Clement, already had certain questions regarding the subject of philanthropy. Since I was seeking to learn by what deeds one can be philanthropic, I asked Peter, and he replied to me: "A philanthropic man is one who behaves with gentleness even towards his enemies and does good to them. In my view, philanthropy has two aspects: one is almsgiving and the other is love for one's neighbor. Every man is one's neighbor. For both the good and bad are men; both the enemy and the friend are men. He who practices philanthropy, therefore, must become an imitator of God, doing good to both the righteous and the unrighteous, just as God bestows both the sun and His rains upon all in the present world. If you desire to do good to the good and to punish the bad, you are undertaking the work of a judge."

"Then is God, Who is going to judge at the Second Coming, not philanthropic?"

"What you say is contradictory," answered Peter. "It is precisely because He judges that He is philanthropic; for, in His love and compassion for those who are wronged, He punishes those who have wronged them."

"So, if I also do good to the good," I said, "but punish the wrongdoers, insofar as they have done wrong to their fellow men, I am philanthropic."

Peter then replied: "If, together with the gift of foresight, you had also been given the authority to judge, you would do this work rightly, on account of your having received the authority to judge others."

"You have answered correctly and truly," I said; "for one cannot judge aright without the gift of foresight, since at times there are some who appear to be good, while doing illicit deeds in secret; then again, there are good men who have been slandered by enemies and are considered bad. But even if one has the authority both to judge and to interrogate, not even then will he judge justly in all cases; for some, while in fact murderers, since they subsequently withstood tortures, have been released as innocent; whereas others, who happened to be innocent, because they could not endure tortures, have falsely accused themselves and have been punished as guilty."

And Peter said: "It is, therefore, necessary for one who wishes to be virtuous, as Christ said, to love his enemies and even pray for them, to bless those who slander him, and to forgive those who despitefully use him (St. Matthew 5:44). For in this way, he will keep the commandments precisely and he will depart this life having been forgiven all of his sins, inasmuch as he loved his neighbor. For if one comes to understand that enemies—who may for a short time maltreat those whom they hate—become the cause of the deliverance from eternal punishment of those whom they have maltreated, then he will love these enemies as his benefactors. In no other way is it possible for anyone to keep such a commandment, except that he love God exceedingly, having previously been instructed by fear of Him. For Holy Scripture says: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 1:7). When, therefore, one is instructed by the fear of God, he will assuredly attain to the measure of love and will thus reckon his neighbor as himself. Tell me: if there are two kings at enmity, their countries cut off from one another, and a subject of one country, being arrested in the country of the other, is sentenced to death, yet is allowed to go free and is punished with only one blow, instead of death—is it not evident that the one who released him [i.e., the enemy—*Trans.*] is philanthropic?"

"Very much so," I replied.

And Peter went on: "Now, what if the same man were to steal from someone something belonging to him (or to another), and, when caught, were to pay back one or two times the worth of the amount stolen, rather than being obliged—having been caught on the territory of another king—to pay four times the amount and to be put to death, do you not think the one who takes double the amount and frees him from the penalty of death philanthropic?"

I then said: "You have now convinced me that those who do wrong are themselves wronged, whereas it is indeed those who are wronged who gain; and for this reason, the whole matter strikes me as most unjust. Those who are thought to do wrong greatly harm themselves, yet benefit those whom they wrong, while those who are considered wronged do greater wrong because, though they have been benefited from (those who have wronged them), nonetheless do not show them reciprocal love.

"However, it is not unjust from the standpoint of those who vex others, but from the standpoint of those who suffer such vexation," said Peter.

After praising his words, I said to Peter: "My Lord, clarify to me the account which you previously gave, namely, that we undergo injustices and sufferings for the forgiveness of our sins."

Peter replied to me: "It is like this: whatever possessions we men acquire, since we always want more, be it clothing, or food, or anything else, we do wrong in acquiring them. If anyone wishes to live virtuously, he should not possess anything. For if possessions are the occasion of sin for their owners, the deprivation of them, in whatever way it happens, is the removal of sins. For this reason, God, in His exceeding love for mankind, allows punishments to befall those who do not live in accordance with His commandments, so that, by their endurance of temporary punishments—on account of their lack of love for God—they might be delivered from eternal punishment."

C. From the Martyrdom of St. Longinos the Centurion

When Pilate received from Cæsar written orders whereby Longinos was condemned to death for his faith in Christ, he immediately handed them over, as he had received them, to the Jews and eagerly dispatched, to slay the blessed one, men who were themselves eager to do so. When they reached Cappadocia, they were informed that Longinos lived in

asceticism on a certain piece of property inherited from his father. They went at once onto the land and began to converse with Longinos, without realizing that he was the one on whose account they had endured great sufferings and made such a long journey. For this reason, they asked him who Longinos was and on what plot of land he dwelt. At that moment, the Holy Spirit disclosed to Longinos everything that was happening. Turning quietly to them, he told them gently and courteously: "Follow me, and I will show you the one whom you seek."

The blessed one then felt inwardly joyful, as though he were already enjoying the delights of the life to come, and, embracing the martyric death (which he was to undergo), said to himself: "'How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!' (Romans 10:15; Isaiah 52:7). Now I shall see the heavens opened; now I shall make known the glory of the Father; now I shall enter the Jerusalem on high, the fatherland of the Angels, the Mother City of the Saints, with great gladness, with joyous applause for my victory, and with glorious trophies. Now I shall put off my earthen garment and lay aside the groanful bonds of the flesh. Now I shall be delivered from corruption and shall joyfully put on incorruption. I am leaving this transitory life and its tempests, with its mighty waves and fearful shipwrecks, and I shall reach the only true harbor, where there is eternal life, free from sorrows. Rejoice, my soul, now that you are going to your Maker; let your countenance be radiant with joy, now that your time has arrived. O Longinos, welcome with kindness those who bring you so many good things; let us lavishly entertain those who invite us to the royal banquet."

After conversing thus with himself, Longinos led the visitors to his house. He offered them splendid hospitality and, after the meal, asked them why they had come and why they were searching so assiduously for Longinos. When they had made him swear that he would not divulge their secret to anyone, the visitors told him what Cæsar had written to Pilate, and that they had come to behead Longinos along with two other soldiers. On learning the identity of the two other condemned men who were due to die with him—I mean those who preferred Christ to being paid employees of the Jews**—he sent word that these men, who had left a short while ago, should come quickly to him, so that they might enjoy these most precious good things with him.

On the first and second day, then, he entertained the soldiers whom Pilate had sent; calling them aside, he took them to a field, where he awaited those whom he had summoned. When he found out that they were approaching, he announced to Pilate's men: "I am the Longinos

whom you seek!" At first, they did not believe him; for, how could they suppose that he was the one who was to suffer martyrdom, seeing him face danger with such great joy?

When they ascertained that he really was the one, and were left with no doubts, they took it badly and were stricken with severe pangs of conscience. "Oh, ill-fated dinner!" they said. "Oh, grievous hospitality! Why did you decide, dear Longinos, to undertake this? Why did you receive into your house those who came to slay you? Hospitality becomes death for you, and you will be sacrificed after the abundant table which you offered. In the persons of those whom you entertained, you have encountered thieves. What more could you have done to cause such grief to those who came to slaughter you?

"Flee quickly, then, so as receive release from death as the reward for your hospitality. We cannot bear to lay a sword upon you. We blush with shame over the hospitality which you offered us; our hands grow numb at the prospect of murder; our minds do not dare think about the death of our benefactor. The danger that we risk from Pilate is easier for us to bear than the rebuke of our consciences. We are prepared to suffer anything rather than recompense Longinos in such a way for his benefaction to us."

Thus did the soldiers, in deep distress, speak to Christ's Martyr; but they could not persuade Longinos. This courageous man answered them with true valor: "Why, my beloved, do you begrudge me these great blessings? Why do you weep with such grief over my death? The present ordeal is not death for me, but the beginning of life. True death, for me, is to abide here on earth, because I am not, here, standing beside my Master or enjoying the blessedness which exists there. Death will bring me an end of evils, but not the end of life; on the contrary, it will convey me to true eternity."

While Longinos was saying these things, and many others, and trying to persuade Pilate's men to do as they had been ordered, the soldiers who had been condemned to die with him arrived. When Longinos saw them, with a joyous expression on his face he greeted them with his right hand, embraced them, and kissed their eyes gladly. "Farewell, soldiers of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom," he said to them, "for the gate of Heaven has now opened for us, and the Angels are now ready to receive our souls and lead them to the Only-Begotten Son of God." Then, turning towards the soldiers, he said: "Come now, carry out your orders."

After this, he put on a clean robe, which they brought to him from his house, rejoicing as if he were going to a wedding, and knelt down

with his companions. O blessed death! They completed their contest, and, on being beheaded, were enrolled in the choirs of the Martyrs.

D. From the Life of St. Theodora

Several of the monks who lived in asceticism with the holy Theodora*** were wounded with the sting of envy towards the Saint, because they saw that blessed woman attaining to the peak of virtue. Without the knowledge of the Superior, they gave her an ostensibly urgent letter which required a speedy reply, and sent her with it to one of the hermitages. In reality, though, it was a ruse, the intention of which—since the errand was to be performed at nighttime—was that she should be devoured by wild beasts. The road to the hermitage was in the wilderness and sustained only wild beasts. But the Devil's scheming proved fruitless, and it was the opposite of what he had planned that actually came to pass.

By the Will of God, a wild animal approached the Saint after she had lost her way, and this animal became an unerring guide for her, until it brought her outside the monastery to which she had been sent—though not even then did it leave her. When the Saint entered the monastery, the animal went in with her, and while she went to deliver the letter to the Superior, it attacked the doorkeeper and was on the verge of tearing him to pieces, when the latter cried out in terror and a multitude of monks together ran and gathered around him. The blessed one returned at once and, perceiving from the hubbub what had happened, ran up to the man at the very moment when the animal was starting to devour him. She seized it by the throat and thus saved the man from death. After anointing the wounded members of his body with oil and invoking the name of Christ, she restored the doorkeeper to his previous state of health, while the beast fell down instantly and burst asunder.

She wished all of this to remain unknown, and for this reason, after returning, she did not disclose anything to the monks. But those whom she had benefited came very early in the morning and recounted on their own what had happened; namely, that a man had been saved by Theodore's prayers and that the throat of a wild animal had given up to them someone whom it had already seized in order to devour him. When the Superior of the monastery heard this, he was astounded and, full of perplexity, asked who it was who had sent Theodora to that place. Since they all denied it, he looked intently at the blessed one and said to her: "Who is it, Theodore, that urged you to go there late at night, in manifest peril of your life?" And behold now the image of a perfect and

guileless soul: wanting to guard her humility, but not wanting to accuse her brothers, she replied that she could not remember the names of those who had sent her, because at that time of night her eyes were heavy with sleep and she was befuddled with drowsiness.

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Concerning Abba Motios, his disciple Isaac related that the Elder first built a monastery in Heracla. Departing from there, he went to another place, where he also built a monastery; however, through the activity of the Devil, there was in that place a certain brother who opposed him and grieved him. The Elder thus withdrew from there to his village and built a monastery [*asketerion—Trans.*] for himself, where he lived as a recluse.

After a considerable time, the Elders of the place from which he had departed, taking with them the brother who was at enmity with him, went to plead with him to return to his monastery. Approaching the place where Abba Sores lived, they left their sheepskin cloaks nearby, along with the hostile brother, and went to Abba Motios. When they knocked on the door of his hermitage, the Elder, standing on a small stepladder, peeped out; he immediately recognized them and asked them: "Where are your cloaks?" "We left them over there with Brother so-and-so," they replied. When the Elder heard the name of the brother who had grieved him, he joyfully took an axe, demolished the door of his hermitage, and ran out to meet the brother. As soon as he saw him, he first made a prostration to him and then embraced him, leading him into his cell. For the next three days, he entertained all of them and even relaxed with them—something that he was not accustomed to doing. After that, he went with them and later became a Bishop, for he was a wonderworker. The Blessed Cyril**** also Consecrated his disciple Isaac to the Episcopacy.

2. Abba Poimen said: "Wickedness never does away with wickedness; but if someone does evil to you, do good to him, so that by doing good you may do away with wickedness."

3. A certain devout Christian was handed over to martyrdom by his maidservant. As they were leading him to his death, he saw the maidservant who had turned him in, and at once he took off the gold ring

that he wore and gave it to her. "Thank you," he told her, "for being the occasion of such blessings for me."

4. The following story was told about a certain brother who lived in the vicinity of a great Elder. He used to enter the Elder's cell and steal from it. The Elder saw this, but did not reprove him. He worked harder and said: "Perhaps the brother is in need." The Elder was himself in great distress, since he had a hard time earning his bread. When he was at the point of death, the brothers gathered around him; on seeing the one who had stolen from him, the Elder said to him, "Come close to me," and kissed his hands. "I thank these hands," he continued, "for it is through their assistance that I am going to the Kingdom of Heaven." Deeply moved by these words, the brother repented. He subsequently became an experienced monk, taking his example from the good deeds of that great Elder.

5. An Elder said: "If you hear that someone hates you or insults you, send or give him a small gift, according to your ability, so that you may have the confidence to say, at the hour of Judgment: 'Forgive us our debts, Master, as we forgive our debtors'" (St. Matthew 6:12).

6. A brother, while travelling, lost his way; and so, he asked some people to give him directions. But they, being criminals, led him astray to a deserted place. One of these malefactors accompanied him, in order to rob him. At one point, he recommended that they cross a canal, when, suddenly, a crocodile started towards the robber. As soon as the brother saw the beast rushing at him, he did not remain indifferent, but called out to the robber, so as to inform him that the beast was on the attack. The robber quickly fled and escaped the animal. After this, he thanked the brother, marvelling at his love.

7. An Elder said: "If you call to mind one who has grieved you, or slighted you, or harmed you, you should regard him as a physician sent by Christ and as a benefactor; for the distress which you experience when you recall him shows that your soul is sick. If you were not ill, you would not be suffering. You ought, therefore, to thank your brother and pray for him—since it is from him that you learnt of your infirmity—and to accept his behavior as a therapeutic medicine which Jesus has sent you. If, instead, you are aggrieved at your brother, it is as if you

are saying to Jesus: 'I do not want to accept Thy remedies; I wish, rather, to putrefy from my wounds.'

"He who wishes to be cured of his spiritual wounds must endure those things which the doctor gives him, whatever they may be. For neither does he who is physically sick take any pleasure in his flesh being cut, or in being cauterized, or in drinking purgatives; on the contrary, he feels revulsion whenever he recalls them. But because he is convinced that it is impossible for him to be delivered from his illness in any other way than by these remedies, he bravely endures them and thanks the doctor. He knows that by this brief spell of disgust he will be delivered from an illness of many years' duration.

"The cautery of Jesus Christ is he who slights or insults you, but delivers you from vainglory. The purgative used by Jesus is he who harms or insults you, but delivers you from greed. If, therefore, you avoid a beneficial tribulation, it is as if you were avoiding eternal life. Who else bestowed such great glory on St. Stephen as did those who stoned him to death?"

8. A man by the name of Alexander became Patriarch of Theoupolis.***** One of his secretaries stole the gold *nomismata* which he kept for the expenses of the Church and fled. After losing his way, the secretary fell into the hands of savage Egyptian barbarians, who took his gold and led him off into the wilds of their country. When the Patriarch heard about this, he sent money and ransomed him with eighty-five *nomismata.*• When the secretary returned, Alexander treated him with such compassion and loving-kindness, that some of the city's inhabitants said with astonishment: "There is nothing more beneficial than for one to commit sins against such a Patriarch."

9. The Blessed Zosimas related the following story: "An Elder lived in the vicinity of a certain *cœnobion.* He was very good and meek; for this reason, the cœnobites loved him exceedingly and respected him. Near the Elder there also lived a certain brother. One day, when the Elder was absent, this brother, at the instigation of the Devil, went and opened the Elder's cell, entered it, took all of his vessels and books, and left.

"Shortly thereafter, the Elder returned. He saw his cell open, entered, but did not find his vessels. Hé went at once to the brother to report what had happened. He stood outside the brother's cell and called him. But when he saw his own belongings in the middle of the cell (for

the brother did not have time to pick them up), not wanting to reprove or embarrass the brother, he pretended that he had some urgency, namely, an intestinal problem; thus, he left the brother's cell and waited for some time elsewhere, until the brother had put the items away. He then returned and began to talk to the brother about other matters, without making any mention of the cell or of the vessels which he had lost.

"A few days later, the Elder's vessels were recognized by some of his acquaintances. Without the Elder's knowledge, they arrested the brother who had stolen them and threw him in prison. On learning that the brother was in prison, and without ascertaining the reason why he had been imprisoned, he went to the Abbot of the neighboring *cœnobion* (for the Abbot and all the brothers respected him for his outstanding virtue, as we stated previously) and said to him: 'Do me a favor and give me a few eggs and a few rusks.' 'Do you have some visitors, Abba?' the Abbot asked him. 'Yes,' answered the Elder. On the orders of the Abbot, he was given whatever he wanted. Taking the rusks and the eggs, the Elder went to the prison where the brother was incarcerated and entered it. When the brother saw him, he ran and fell at his feet.

"'Forgive me,' he said, 'for it is because of you that I am here; I stole your things. Your book is in such and such a place, your cloak is in such and such a place,' and he went on to tell him where everything was. The Elder then replied to him: 'Let your heart be at rest, my child, for I did not come here for these things, nor did I have the slightest idea that you were here because of me. I heard that you were in prison, but I did not know why. It is because I felt sorry for you in your distress that I came here to offer you a little comfort. Look, here are the eggs and the rusks that I have brought for you. But now that I have found out that you are being detained here on my account, I shall do everything I can, until—with God's help—I get you out of jail.'

"And, indeed, he went away and interceded with certain people who had influence in the world (the Elder was known to them, too, for his virtue), and they sent word and released the brother from prison."

* This is a reference to the Holy Martyr Menas the Euphonious (*Kallikelados*), whose memory is celebrated on December 10. For more details concerning the martyrdom of St. Menas and St. Hermogenes, the eparch who came to belief in Christ, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XII, p. 273.

** Meaning the soldiers who served under St. Longinos when he still bore the rank of centurion, being present at the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord. (See the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. X, p. 354.)

*** For the life of St. Theodora [a woman who disguised herself as a man, in order to become a monk—*Trans.*], see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. IX, p. 252.

**** See the endnotes for Hypothesis XXVIII, above.

***** Antioch was named "Theoupolis" by Justinian, when it was rebuilt after its destruction [see the endnotes for Hypothesis XXXIII, "Antioch," Book I—*Trans.*]. Alexander II was Patriarch of this city from 695 to 702. We cannot say with certainty whether in this case the reference is to the aforementioned Patriarch of Antioch. [Since this anecdote is also found in chapter 34 of the *Spiritual Meadow* by John Moschos (†619), the Alexander in question must be Patriarch Alexander I of Antioch, who reigned from 413 to 420/421 and whose saintly life is attested by Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, ch. 35) and Nicephoros Kallistos (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book XIV, ch. 25)—*Trans.*]

• For the meaning of the word *"nomisma"* and its value, see the endnotes for Hypothesis XXXVIII, above.

Hypothesis XLI

That we should not hate any man.

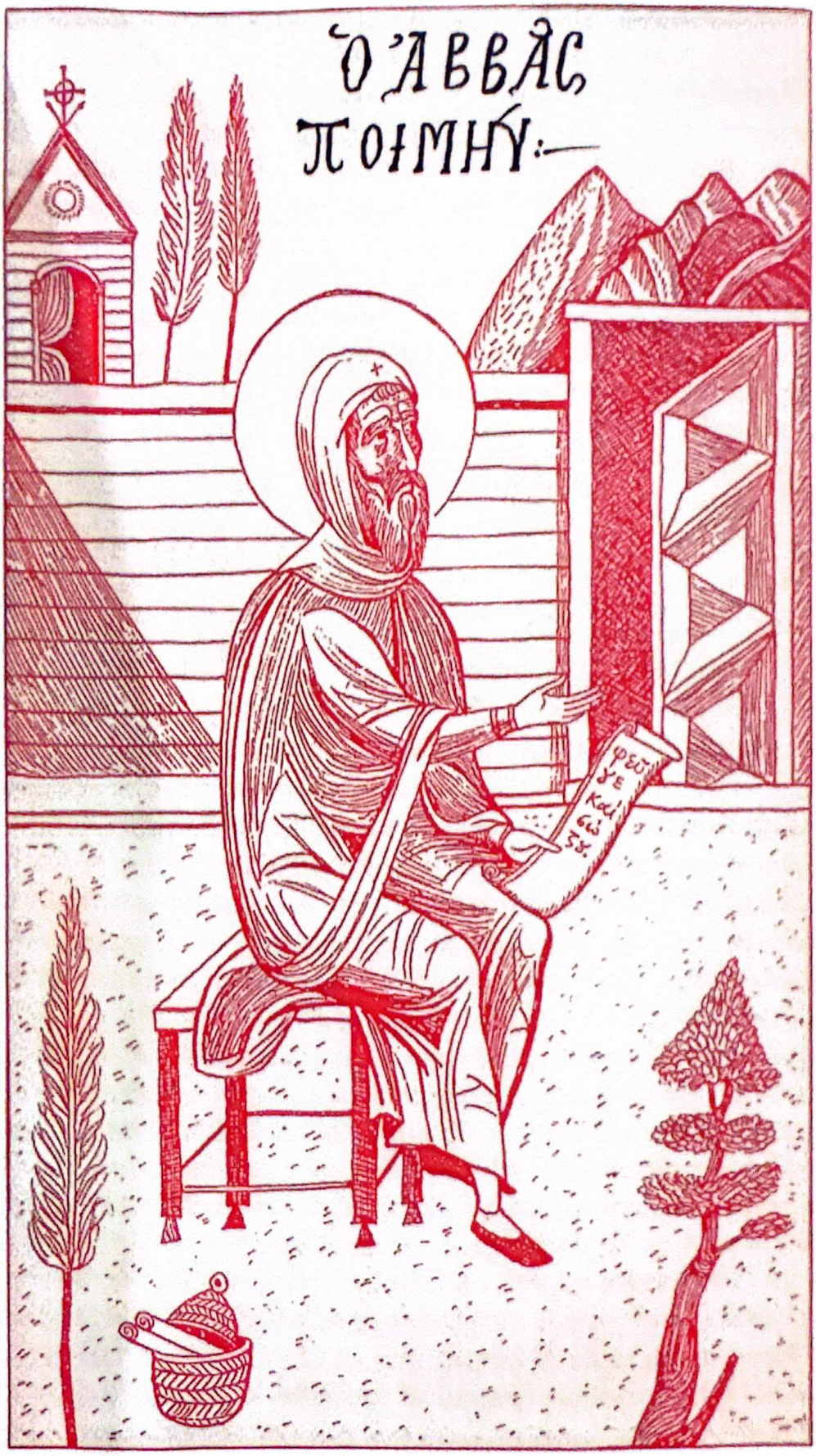
A. From the *Gerontikon*

A brother once visited Abba Poimen. As they were sitting with some other people, the visitor praised a certain brother, saying that he was a hater of evil. "What does it mean to hate evil?" Abba Poimen asked him. The brother was at a loss and could not find a suitable answer. He got up at once, made a prostration to the Elder, and said to him: "Abba, what *is* hatred of evil?" And the Elder replied: "He who hates his own sins and justifies his neighbor has attained to hatred of evil."

B. From St. Diadochos

A God-loving soul is troubled, in the beginning, by many passions—above all by anger and hatred. It suffers this, not so much because of the demons who stir up these passions, but because it is making progress. Because as long as the soul feels the attraction of a worldly attitude, even if it sees certain people trampling what is just, it remains unmoved and undisturbed; for, preoccupied with its own desires, it pays no attention to the justice of God. But when it begins to rise above its passions, not even in its dreams can it bear to see the justice of God violated, because it now has disdain for present realities and loves God alone. Rather, it feels anger and agitation against malefactors, until it sees these violators of justice apologizing by pious reflections before the dignity of justice.

For this reason, it disdains the unjust and loves the just exceedingly; for the eye of the soul becomes completely immune to distraction when it renders its veil—*i.e.*, the body—utterly refined through self-control. Nevertheless, it is much better for us to lament the insensitivity of the unjust than to hate them. For, although the unjust are worthy of hatred, it makes no sense for a God-loving soul to be troubled by hatred, because when hatred is present in the soul, knowledge of God is no longer active within it.



Abba Poimen

C. From Abba Isaac

Do not hate the sinner, for we are all culpable. And if you are stirred up against him by zeal for God, weep for the sinner and do not hate him, but hate his sins. Pray for him, so that you may emulate Christ, Who was not angry with sinners but prayed for them and wept over Jerusalem (St. Matthew 23:37). We are mocked in many instances by the Devil; why, then, should we hate and abhor him who has been mocked by our common Enemy? If you hate the sinner because he is not righteous in your estimation, you show thereby that you, too, are a sinner, because you do not have love. He who is deprived of love is also deprived of God, for God is love.

Do not hate or persecute the sinner, but become, by your sympathy towards him, a herald of the goodness of God, Who, although you are undeserving, rules over you and does not reject or abhor you and does not punish you for your many and great sins. Emulate His compassion and goodness, then, to the best of your ability, and be merciful to your fellow-servant, so that by your small act of sympathy you may in return receive from God His very great sympathy.

Hypothesis XLII

That the remembrance of wrongs (rancor) is destructive, and that it not only renders spiritual labors useless, but even deflects God's sympathy; and how we are to deal with it.

A. From the Martyrdom of St. Nicephoros

A certain Priest by the name of Saprikios had a very close friend in the Blessed Nicephoros, who was a layman. So great was their mutual love that each of them thought that he dwelt in the soul of the other. But by the envy of the Enemy, something came to pass which destroyed that whole friendship and brought them into open hostility, and so much so that the one could not bear to set eyes upon the other; and if they did meet anywhere, each of them would avert his gaze elsewhere, as if they loathed the very sight of one another. For, in truth, when great friendships degenerate into enmity, by reason of this change in attitude great love turns into implacable hatred.

But the Blessed Nicephoros, a good soul who was both forbearing and compassionate, quickly recovered from this passion; hence, although he was not unaware of the cause of the passion, he hastened with persistence and fervor of soul to restore the beauty of love. To start with, he sent some acquaintances to his friend to bring about reconciliation; in order to achieve this goal, he attributed the blame for the misunderstanding to himself and sincerely sought forgiveness. But Saprikios remained unyielding and harsh and did nothing to dispel the enmity, though he was a Priest and a disciple of Christ—Who is both irenic and without rancor—and though he offered the Bloodless Sacrifice and always taught his flock, among other things, not to remember wrongs. In the wake of this, the gentle Nicephoros approached Saprikios at a suitable moment, fell at his feet, and with warm tears begged that they forgive one another and become friends again, as they were before.

But Father Saprikios, in no way moved by these gestures and not letting go of his anger—although he himself was the cause of the scandal—shoved Nicephoros aside and quickly passed him by, without saying a word or even casting so much as a glance at his friend.

While things stood thus between them, the one attempting in every

possible way to restore their erstwhile friendship, but the other not dissipating his hatred, a new persecution was stirred up against the Christians by Julian;* no sooner did he become Emperor, than he ordered all Christians under his dominion to be harshly tortured and killed, if they would not abjure their Christian faith.

When this order reached the city in which the two of these men—Nicephoros and Saprikios—lived, Saprikios was immediately arrested, being more prominent on account of his Priestly rank. He was tried by the governor and pressure was put on him to abjure his faith. But because he stood his ground courageously and could not be convinced to accept the impiety of idolatry, the governor, despairing of being able to persuade him, proceeded to punish him. First of all, he placed Saprikios on a horrible rack.** This rack was pulled and turned by such a variety of mechanisms that it seemed to everyone that it would tear Saprikios apart by its tautness, that it would wear out his entire body, and that it would finally put him to a most violent death. But since he endured the severity of the torture, and did not deny his confession in any way, the persecutor, giving up all hope of changing him, sentenced him to death, ordering him to be executed by the sword.

After this, Saprikios was led to his death. Nicephoros, who was aware of all these events, when he saw that Saprikios was making his final journey, thought that this was the most opportune time to realize his desire; that is, to effect a reconciliation. He suddenly appeared, clasped Saprikios' feet, and fervently implored and entreated him not to leave his friend behind unforgiven, but to forgive him his sin. Nicephoros entreated Saprikios persistently and watered his feet with warm tears; but he—oh, the uncharitable and cruel soul!—did not even turn to look at his friend, who had flung himself at his feet; nor was he mollified by so much emotion and so many lamentations, but, blocking his ears with the wax of rancor, proceeded more quickly on his way, hastening to bypass his friend and his piteous pleas.

But not even then did the wondrous Nicephoros give up hope; he immediately went by another—quicker—route and, after running as fast as he could, caught up with Saprikios in the city. He repeated his entreaties to him with even greater ardor, not only with his tongue and his lips, but, as if he had bared his soul, with every part of his body—with gestures and with abundant tears, he begged him to show pity. But Saprikios, like a stone, remained completely deaf to all of these appeals. In this state of enmity and irritation, as if beside himself with anger, he arrived at the place of execution.

And while the executioners' hands were raising the sword, and Saprikios was at the point of bowing his neck—there being crowns above his head and he being prepared to pass over to Him Who rewards victors in the contest—something terrible happened. The executioners forced him to kneel, so that they could behead him; but he, darkened by rancor, appeared not to know among whom he found himself and to forget why they had arrested him. Bewildered and out of his mind, he asked them why they were going to execute him. "Because," they replied, "you held the Emperor's orders in contempt and could not be persuaded to sacrifice to our gods." And then—woe is me! Oh, the dreadful fall caused by rancor!—Saprikios confessed that he himself was an unbeliever, like those who were holding him, and denied the Christian Faith, without shame, before the eyes of all.

When the Godly Nicephoros saw this, he grieved even more in his soul and implored Saprikios with yet greater fervor: "O Father and brother, do not seek to betray God, Who created you and to Whom you are going to return after death. Do not offend the laws of piety or the confession which you gave before God and Angels. Revere the previous sufferings which you endured for the sake of Christ: the horrible turnings of the rack and your recent physical injuries. Honor the great dignity of the Priesthood. Do not become a bad example for the others or a model of ungodliness. I beseech you on bended knee, my friend, and I kiss your feet. Do not gainsay your confession of the Holy Trinity, now that you have the prizes in hand and the athlete's crowns are almost on your head."

Thus did he beseech his friend with anguish of soul. But because Saprikios became more and more callous and that Pharaonic*** heart of his hardened, these words did not soften him; for he preferred to deny the Faith than to relinquish his rancor. Then the good Nicephoros, burning with zeal for godliness and for his friend, and powerless to accomplish anything, offered himself as a Martyr instead, confessed Christ, and placed his neck under the executioner's sword, seeking the same death as Saprikios. In this manner, he bravely armed the hands of the executioners against himself.

However, the executioners refrained from acting impulsively against Nicephoros, because the governor had not yet heard anything about him and had not given them any instructions in this regard. However, when the situation was reported to the governor by someone who came running from among those who had gathered at the place of martyrdom, he immediately altered the death sentence, so that it was now

directed against Nicephoros. When the condemnation, in the form of a letter, was conveyed to the executioners, the good Nicephoros suffered a Martyr's death by the sword. And thus, within a short time and with little effort, he gained the Heavenly Kingdom, proving himself to be victorious [*"nikephoros"—Trans.*] not by name, but by deed.

From this, we conclude that it is not so much bodily struggles, labors, and hardships that reconcile us to God, as a compassionate soul, charity, and love for one's neighbor (which is the summit of all good things). These things have all been enjoined by our Master and Teacher.****

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Makarios said: "If we remember the evils which men do to us, we destroy within ourselves the capacity for remembrance of God. But if we do not remember the evils that we suffer, then we will remain unconquered by the demons."*****

2. An Elder said: "He who steals, or lies, or sins in any other way, oftentimes, immediately after committing the sin, groans and reproaches himself and comes to repentance; but he who maintains rancor in his soul, whether eating, sleeping, or walking, is consumed like iron by rust. He always has sin for an inseparable companion, his prayer becomes a curse, and his toil is not acceptable, even if he should shed his blood for the sake of Christ."

3. A brother, bothered by someone, went immediately to an Elder who lived in the Cells. "Father," he said, "a certain brother has offended me, and the demon is tempting me to take revenge on him." "Listen to me, my child," the Elder replied, "Go to your cell, be still, and pray fervently to God for the brother who has wronged you; in this way, you will receive speedy deliverance from your passion." The brother did as the Elder advised him, and within a week God extinguished the anger from his soul, because he forced himself and showed obedience to the Elder.

4. Two brothers were arrested in a time of persecution and were led off to be tortured. After they had been tortured for a day, they were thrown into prison. As a result of demonic activity, there was a misunderstanding between them and they became somewhat alienated from

each other. One of them repented and made a prostration to the other, saying: "They are going to execute us tomorrow; so let us put an end to our mutual hostility and let us love one another." But he did not prevail upon the other.

The following day, they were once again led to the tribunal and subjected to fresh tortures; and the one who had not accepted his brother's repentance was overcome at the first provocation. "Why is it that yesterday," the ruler asked him, "when you were undergoing so many torments, you did not listen to my words?" "Because yesterday," the brother replied, "I had love for my brother and the Grace of God strengthened me. But today, I bore him ill-will, and because of this, I have been stripped of God's protection and encouragement."

C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Just as a cloud darkens the sun, so also the thought of rancor darkens the mind; for foxes will take up their abode in the soul of a rancorous man, and wild beasts—that is, the evil and pernicious demons—will make their dens in a troubled heart.

D. From Abba Isaiah

If a brother wrongs you and someone reproaches him in your presence, guard your heart lest the evil reappear in you. Recall at once the sins which you have committed against God and which you want Him to forgive you, and do not seek to requite your neighbor. If you hear that someone has said something against you and you encounter him somewhere, or he visits you, be sure, to the best of your ability, that your countenance is joyous and kindly. Do not tell him anything of what you have heard, for Holy Scripture says: "He that remembereth wrongs is a transgressor" (Proverbs 21:24).

If you are keeping silence in your cell, and you recall someone who has wronged you, arise and pray to God with all your heart that He will forgive that person, and the thought of vengeance will immediately depart from you. Do not desire to hear that he who grieved you has suffered some mishap, lest you thereby requite him in your heart.

E. From Abba Mark

Evil, when pondered upon in one's thoughts, makes the heart bra-

zen; but when one wars with the heart through self-control and hope, it is rendered contrite.

F. From St. Maximos

Distress always accompanies rancor; thus, when with distress the mind conjures up the image of a brother, it harbors a grudge against him. "The ways of the rancorous lead to death" (Proverbs 12:28), because "whoever remembereth wrongs is a transgressor" (Proverbs 21:24).

If you harbor rancor against someone, pray for him and you will arrest the movement of passion; for through prayer you can separate the feeling of distress from your memory of the wrong that he did to you. When you become loving and compassionate towards the person who wronged you, you completely eradicate the passion from your soul. If someone else harbors a grudge against you, be kind and humble towards him and maintain cordial relations with him, and you will deliver him from his passion.•

G. From St. Ephraim

Smoke drives away bees and rancor drives knowledge from the heart. Beseech the Lord and pour out tears before His goodness. Let not rancor dwell in your soul, and be as incense before Him.

* Julian, a nephew of St. Constantine the Great, became Emperor of the Byzantine state in 361 A.D. Although he had been brought up a Christian and was acquainted with St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) in Athens, where they were studying together, when he became Emperor, he nonetheless wanted to restore the ancient idolatrous religion and to make it the official state religion. For this reason, he was called the "Apostate," or "Transgressor" [*"Parabates"—Trans.*], of the Christian religion. However, Julian's endeavor proved fruitless, because idolatry had died a decisive death, in spite of the persecutions which he ordered against Christians and in spite of the privileges which he granted to pagans. He was slain while waging war against the Persians, in 363 A.D.

** The "rack" was a device used for torturing criminals or convicts, who were tied on top of it; through the turning of the rack, their various members were stretched, terrible pains being caused thereby to those being tortured.

*** The author calls Saprikios' heart "Pharaonic" because just as after each plague which God sent against him in order to liberate the Hebrews, Pharaoh's heart was hardened even more once the plague passed, so also the heart of Saprikios, as much as Nicephoros besought him to make reconciliation, was hardened yet more, and finally the passion of rancor led him to become an apostate and to deny the Faith of Christ.

**** For a fuller account of the martyrdom of the Holy Martyr Nicephoros, and also of Saprikios, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. II, p. 248.

***** This version differs from the other extant versions of the saying, as recorded in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (Makarios 36, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 277D), which is also attested in the *Verba Seniorum* (Book X, §34, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. LXXIII, col. 918BC) and by Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Book IV, ch. 23)—*Editors.*

• The second paragraph of this passage appears in a different form in the *Philokalia* (Athens: Astir, 1975), Vol. II, p. 39. Also, the text found in *The Evergetinos* contains one misprint and two words that are not found either in the *Philokalia* or in the *Patrologia Græca* (Vol. XC, col. 1044CD)—*Editors.*

Hypothesis XLIII

That we should not curse anyone.

A. From St. Gregory the Dialogist

In the region of Nursia,* there dwelt two monks who led lives of holiness; the one was called Florentius, and the other Eutychius. Eutychius, whose spiritual zeal became greater and greater every day, as did the fervor of his spiritual energy, strove to bring the souls of many people close to God through the advice that he imparted. He subsequently became Abbot of a monastery in that region, after the persistent entreaties of the monks, and remained there for many years. By the example of his holy way of life, he led many to perfection. For this reason, after death, he was glorified by God with signs and wonders—by his clothing alone droughts were brought to an end and many sick people were healed.

After Eutychius withdrew to the monastery, Florentius remained in the same hermitage where they had both previously lived. He continued to be guileless and persistent in prayer; in this way, he passed the present life on his own. He besought Almighty God to help him to remain there by himself.

One day, after prayer, as he was coming out of his cell, he saw a bear standing in front of his door, with his head inclined towards the ground, showing very clearly that he had been sent by God to serve him. When the man of God understood the reason why the bear had come, he gave thanks to God and entrusted his four sheep to the bear, because he did not have anyone else to tend them, giving it the following instructions: "Go and tend these sheep, and return at the sixth hour."**

So, the bear took charge of the sheep and led them to pasture; and he returned with them at the appointed hour. When the righteous Florentius wanted to fast, he ordered him to return at the ninth hour, and the bear would return without fail at the hour at which he was ordered to return. This happened every day, and the bear diligently tended the sheep for a considerable time. When news of this miracle became widespread, four men from among the disciples of the most pious Eutychius were tempted by the Devil. The Evil One, that is to say, put envy into

their souls, since, supposedly, their Teacher did not work miracles, whereas Florentius was becoming famous for a miracle as great as this one. The Evil One thus incited them to evil, and, after lying in ambush, they killed the bear.

When the hour arrived at which the bear usually returned, Florentius waited for him; but when it grew dark and the bear—which, in his great guilelessness, he called a brother—was nowhere to be seen, he began to worry. He passed the entire night in such a state of distress. On the morning of the following day, he went to the field to look for the bear, as well as the sheep. After finding it dead and making enquiries, he learned who the killers were and began to lament, not so much over the death of the bear as over the wickedness of the brothers.

On hearing what had happened and summoning Florentius to himself, the venerable Eutychius embraced him and tried to comfort him. But the servant of God Florentius, overwhelmed by great grief, prayed before Eutychius: "I hope in Almighty God, that in this life those who killed my bear without it causing them any harm at all will be punished before men."

A punishment from God followed immediately upon these words: the four monks who had killed the bear were smitten with leprosy and, in the end, their body parts rotted and they died. When this happened, the man of God Florentius was deeply troubled. He was frightened because he had cursed them, and he did not cease throughout his life from calling himself the murderer of those brothers, mourning over them, and beseeching God to forgive him his sin. We believe that Almighty God allowed this to happen, lest that wondrous man should ever dare, thereafter, to unleash the missile of a curse against anyone when upset by something.

Peter

And is this sin so serious? If, that is, on top of getting angry, we curse someone?

Gregory

Why are you asking me, Peter, whether this sin is so serious, when Paul says that revilers will not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Corinthians 6:10)? Consider how serious a sin it is, since it deprives one who is guilty of it of the Kingdom of God!

* Nursia (Norcia) is a small city in Central Italy, situated on the River Fredara between L'Aquila and Spoleto; it is about twenty-eight miles away from each of these cities.

** Regarding the division of the day into hours in that era, see the endnotes for Hypothesis X, above—*Trans.*

Hypothesis XLIV

That we not only should not insult anyone, but should even bless those who insult us and thereby curb their anger.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. It was said concerning Abba Makarios of Egypt that on one occasion he was going up from Sketis to Mount Nitria;* as he approached the place, he said to his disciple: "Go on a short distance ahead." His disciple went ahead, meeting a pagan priest, who was running. He called out to the priest, in a loud voice: "Hey, hey, you Devil, where are you running?" Angered at this, the pagan priest beat him violently with his staff and, leaving him half-dead, continued his journey.

A little farther on, Abba Makarios encountered the priest, who had resumed running, and said to him: "May you be saved, may you be saved, you weary man."** When he heard this greeting, the pagan priest came up to him and asked: "What good did you see in me that you greeted me so cordially?" "I did so because I saw you toiling, and you do not know that you are toiling in vain." The pagan priest responded: "I am moved by your greeting, and I see that you are a man of God; yet I was insulted by another wicked monk, who came across me before you did, and I beat him almost to death." (Abba Makarios realized that he was referring to his disciple.)

Clasping the Elder's feet, the pagan priest said to him: "I will not let you go unless you make me a monk."

In the meantime, they came to the place where the disciple was stretched out like a corpse, after the thrashing he had received. They lifted him up and carried him to the Church on the mountain. When the Elders saw the pagan priest with Abba Makarios, they were astonished; but when they learned of his conversion, they glorified God and made the former pagan priest a monk; and through him, many pagans became Christians.

2. Abba Makarios, therefore, said: "An evil word makes even a good man evil; but a good word makes even an evil man good."

3. One of the Fathers said: "If someone insults you, bless him; and if he accepts the blessing, it will be good for both of you; but if he does not accept it, he will be chastised by God for his insolence, whereas you will be rewarded for your blessing."

4. An Elder said: "We behold the Cross of Christ and we read about His sufferings; why, then, do we not endure even a single insult?"

B. From Abba Isaiah

If someone speaks a harsh word to you, do not get angry at him, but hasten to make a prostration to him, before you reproach him in your heart; for otherwise, you will quickly be overcome by anger. If someone insults you, do not gainsay him until he falls silent. If you examine yourself carefully, and find within yourself that what you heard from him is correct, repent as one who has sinned, and the goodness of God will accept you back.

* Regarding Nitria, see the endnotes for Hypothesis VI, Book I.

** "May you be saved" was a greeting which monastics and pious laypeople used to address to each other in that era, and it signifies a prayerful appeal for the salvation of the person being greeted. And, indeed, what more expressive prayer is there than this, whereby one prays for the salvation of the soul of one's interlocutor? What comparison is there between this greeting and today's "good morning" or even "hello," which is a passing wish, whereas this is a wish for eternal salvation? If only this greeting would return to use today.

Hypothesis XLV

That we should not lie, but tell the truth.

A. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder was asked: "What is the life of a monk?" And he replied: "A truthful mouth, a holy body, and a pure heart."

2. An Elder said: "Falsehood is 'the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts'; but truth is 'the new man, which is created after God' (Ephesians 4:22, 24)."

3. The same Elder also said: "The root of good deeds is truth, while falsehood is death."

B. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Just as the mouth of a truthful man is sanctified by the Truth, that is, the Lord—for He says: "I am the Truth" (St. John 14:6)—so also the liar is defiled by his father, the Devil; for the Savior clearly stated that falsehood proceeds from the Evil One (St. John 8:44).

C. From Abba Isaiah

Do not praise anything other than what you have seen; do not speak about what you have heard as if you have seen it. Teach your tongue to know the words of God and falsehood will flee from you. Love for the glory that comes from men gives birth to falsehood; but when you destroy it with humility, then the fear of God increases in your heart. Guard yourself from falsehood, for it expels the fear of God from you.

D. From Abba Mark

The mouth of the humble man will speak the truth; but he who contradicts the truth is like the servant who smote the Lord on His cheek (Isaiah 50:6; *cf.* St. Mark 14:65).

E. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Anoub said: "Since the day I was called a monk, no lie has come out of my mouth."

2. Abba Gregory said: "These three things does God demand of every man who has Divine Baptism: right faith from the soul, truth from the tongue, and chastity from the body."

F. From St. Ephraim

On one occasion, while some brothers were performing a small task on a wintry night, one of them, bothered by the nighttime cold, returned to his cell, and another murmured against him. So, they sent another brother to call him. This brother found him in discomfort and said to him: "The brothers are asking, 'How are you?' They say for you not to worry about the work; we are doing it." He replied: "May the Lord remember your love. I really wanted to labor with you, but my infirmity prevents me." When the brother who had been sent returned, he told the other brothers: "That brother is weary, and he said to me, 'I really wanted to labor with you, but I cannot.'" Such is the one who takes recourse in lying for the sake of prudence.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Two Elders were at odds with each other. It so happened that one of them fell ill. A brother went to visit him. The Elder then besought the brother, saying: "Elder so-and-so and I have a mutual grievance, and I wanted to ask him that we be reconciled." The brother answered: "Have you given me a command, Abba? If so, I will ask him." After leaving the cell, the brother began to think to himself how to set about this task; for he was afraid that perhaps the other Elder would not accept this entreaty and the enmity between the Elders might become greater.

By God's Providence, another brother brought him five figs and a few mulberries; the brother took these and put them in his own cell. After selecting one fig and a few mulberries, he took them to the Elder whom he was intending to visit. "Abba," he said, "someone brought these fruits to Elder so-and-so, who is ill, and since I happened to be there, he said to me: 'Take these and give them to Elder so-and-so.' So, I brought them to you." On hearing this, the Elder was dumbfounded

and asked: "He sent these to me?" "Yes, Abba," replied the brother. So, the Elder accepted them with pleasure and said: "Welcome."

The brother then returned to his cell. He gathered two of the figs and a few of the mulberries and took them to the other Elder, who was ill. After making a prostration, he said to him: "Take these, Abba; Elder so-and-so sent them to you." Full of joy, the Elder asked: "So, are we reconciled?" "Yes, Abba," the brother answered, "through your prayers." "Glory to God," said the Elder. In this way the two Elders were reconciled, by the Grace of God and by the sagacity of the brother, who made peace between them with three figs and a few mulberries, without the Elders knowing what he had done.

2. Abba Agathon once asked Abba Alonios whether it is ever acceptable to lie, and Abba Alonios replied that it is acceptable. "When?" asked Abba Agathon. The Elder answered: "Let us suppose that two men have committed murder before your eyes and that one of them has taken refuge in your cell. The magistrate is searching for him and he asks you: 'Did a murder take place before your eyes?' If you do not tell a lie, you are handing him over to death. It is better for you to leave him unconditionally to the judgment of God, for He knows all things. It is clear from this, therefore, that at times a lie is preferable to the truth."

Hypothesis XLVI

That slander is a great sin, and that it redounds to the glory of those who are slandered, if they patiently put up with their slanderers; and that even in this life, punishment from God often comes upon slanderers.

A. From Palladios

Once upon a time, in Cæsarea of Palestine,* the unmarried daughter of a certain Presbyter was deflowered by someone and became pregnant; her seducer advised her to slander a Reader of the city as the culprit. When interrogated by her father, she accused the Reader. Her father reported the matter to the Bishop, who summoned the clergy, brought the Reader into their midst, and asked him about the incident involving the Presbyter's daughter. "I have nothing to do with this matter," replied the Reader. Angered by his denial, the Bishop said to him sternly: "Do you not admit your sin and repent, you wretch?" The Reader replied again: "Please understand, I spoke the truth when I said that I have nothing to do with this matter, because I am innocent of the charge pertaining to her; but if you want to hear me say that I did what I did not do, then, 'I did it.'"

After he had said this, the Bishop deposed him from the rank of Reader. The Reader then fell at the Bishop's feet and pleaded with him, saying: "Since you have made this decision, my Lord Bishop, that I am not worthy to be a clergyman of Your Holiness, since I said 'I have sinned,' order that this young woman be given to me henceforth in marriage; for hereafter, neither am I a clergyman nor is she a virgin." The Bishop and the girl's father believed that he felt such affection towards her that he could not be parted from her, and for this reason they gave her to him in marriage. The man then entrusted her to a convent and asked the Abbess to care for her until she gave birth. After leaving her there, he took refuge in a cell that was situated in an arid place, in which he enclosed himself and gave himself over to very strict asceticism.

With a contrite heart, he took refuge in Christ, saying to Him with many tears: "O Lord, Thou Who knowest the hearts of all, Thou knowest also my deeds, as Thou knowest all things before they happen, as

well as the mind of every man. Thou art the keen examiner of thoughts. Thou art the helper of those who are wronged and the unerring avenger of those who are slandered. For nothing unjust is pleasing to Thee, and every turn of the scale of justice is in Thy hands. Therefore, O Master, it belongeth to Thine unerring and just judgment to declare the truth and to prove my innocence."

While the Reader persevered in prayer and fasting, the time came for that wretched woman to give birth. The just judgment of God caused her severe and unbearable pain. She was tormented by dark visions, and for seven days she suffered dreadful pangs, as if she were in Hell; and yet, the babe did not emerge from her womb. The pangs became more and more unbearable. She began to utter loud groans and to cry out: "Woe is me, the wretch! I am in danger of perishing from two sins into which I fell—fornication and slander. For, although someone else corrupted me, it was I who accused the Reader." When she could no longer live or die, let alone give birth, and when the sisterhood could not endure hearing her harrowing wails, they ran quickly and reported the situation to the Bishop. At once, everyone offered up a fervent supplication in the Church; but the prayers of the innocent man rendered this supplication unacceptable to God.

The Bishop, therefore, arose and went to the place where the Reader had immured himself and, standing in front of the door, knocked for a long time. Since the Reader neither heard nor responded, the Bishop ordered the door to be broken down. When he entered, he found the Reader stretched out on the ground. Apologetically, he said to him: "My brother, Reader Evstathios, the judgment of God has revealed, through your prayers, the slander against you; have pity, then, on her who sinned against you and forgive her her sin. It is on account of your prayers that she is undergoing such sufferings. Beseech God to deliver her from this childbirth, which is tormenting her with terrible pangs." The Reader having prayed fervently with the Bishop, that hapless woman was delivered from her agony and gave birth to a child. She then begged everyone to forgive her the iniquity which she had committed against a righteous man.

From then on, everyone regarded the Reader as a Martyr. After forsaking all worldly cares, he reached such a height of virtue that he was deemed worthy to receive spiritual gifts from God. I have related these events so that we may understand well to what punishments slanderers are consigned even in this life, before the future punishment in Gehenna; and, conversely, what honors and spiritual gifts those who are

slandered, and who devote themselves to prayer and thanksgiving and have recourse to God, are vouchsafed to receive from God even now, in this life, and in the future life.

B. From the Life of St. Gregory the Wonderworker

The great Gregory, after he had studied the whole of Greek philosophy and realized, from this experience, how groundless, contradictory, and feeble its teachings were, became a disciple of the Gospel of Christ. Even before he was reborn through Holy Baptism, he lived so virtuously that he took not a single sin into the laver (of Baptism).** He remained in Alexandria, where all those who studied philosophy and medicine congregated, and among his peers he was a wondrous sight, since, young though he was, he was more greatly distinguished than his elders, on account of his wisdom. But the praise ascribed to a chaste man is a reproach for those who defile themselves. In order to have some excuse for giving the impression that they were not the only ones who committed sins, some licentious young men devised a ruse whereby they might sully Gregory's reputation. They brought forward a prostitute from a notorious brothel to slander him.

While he was conversing, as he was accustomed, in a dignified manner about some philosophical issue with the local sages, the dissolute woman approached him with a mincing and lascivious gait; she showed, by all that she did and said, that she was supposedly acquainted with him. She then said that he had not paid her and, with great impudence, added the reasons why he had fallen behind in his payments.

On hearing these words, those who were familiar with the Saint's way of life were indignant and roused to anger against the woman. But Gregory was not at all flustered, unlike those who were angry on his account. He neither said anything (by way of protest) about the slander, as is natural for one who is aggrieved, nor did he appeal to his way of life, in order to defend his innocence. Nor did he attempt to rebut the accusation with an oath. Nor did he castigate the wickedness of those who had concocted this slander against him. But calmly, without raising his voice, he turned to one of his friends and said to him: "Pay her the money that she is asking for, so that she will not disturb our conversation or pester us any more."

St. Gregory's friend, having found out from the prostitute how much money she wanted, readily counted it all out for her, and in this way the conspiracy of the licentious youths against the chaste man was

brought to an end. And as the dishonorable woman held the earnings in her hands, there came from God proof of Gregory's chastity and a censure of the slander of his peers.

This is what happened: At the very moment that she took the money in her hands, the prostitute was blinded by a demonic spirit, emitted a harrowing groan like a wild beast, and fell to the ground in the midst of those assembled there. They all witnessed a terrible and fearful sight. She tore out the hair of her head with her own hands and lacerated her flesh, rolled her eyes, and foamed at the mouth. The demon did not cease choking the woman until the great Gregory called upon God and made supplication for her. These events, which occurred during St. Gregory's youth, were a fitting prelude to his subsequent and admirable Christian life.***

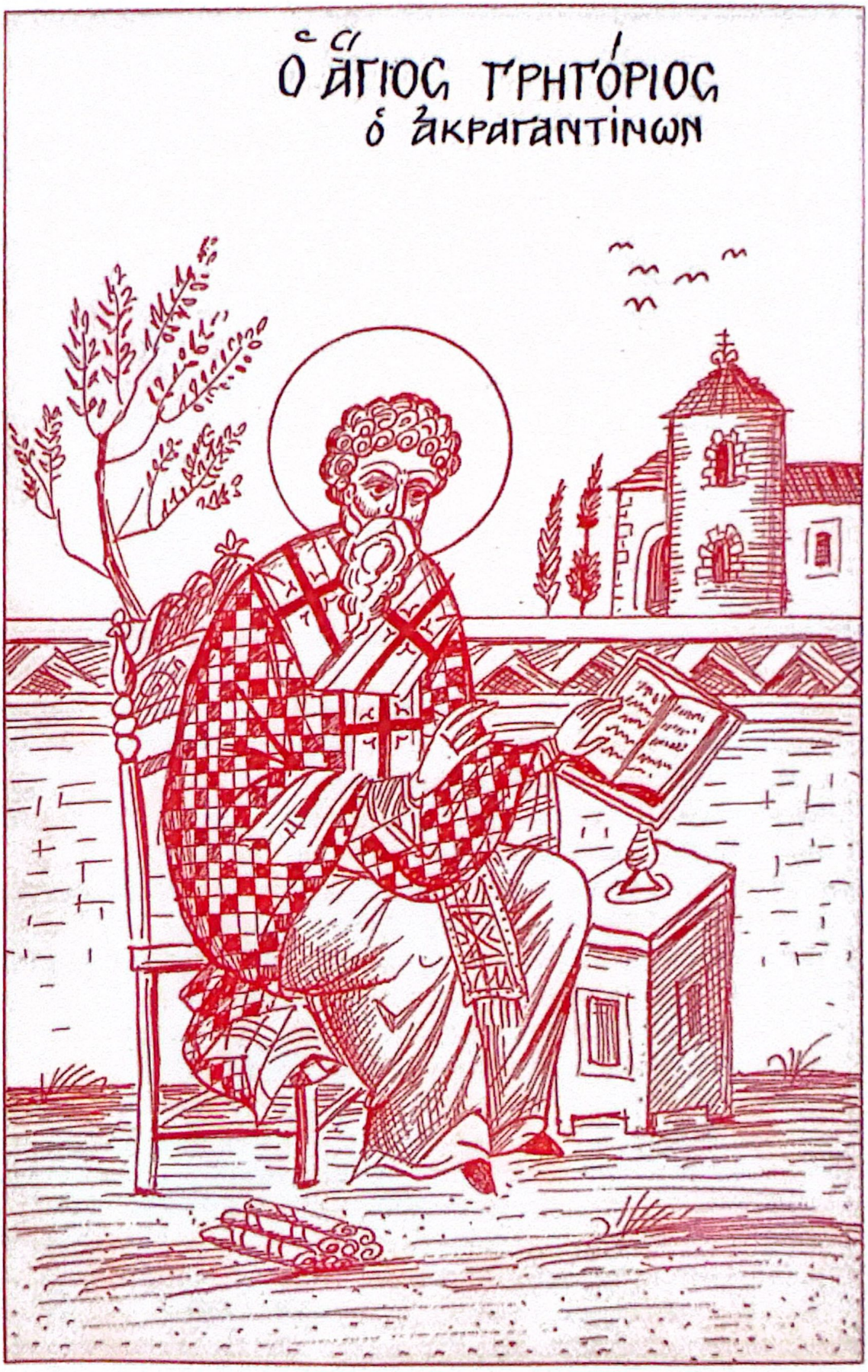
C. From the Life of St. Gregory of Akragas

Similar to this is the story of the great Gregory, Bishop of Akragas.**** He, too, took up the Cross of slander with meekness. He was confined as a prisoner for an entire two years in a pitch-dark and stifling room. Since he endured everything with gratitude and forbearance, he was later glorified by God in the midst of a synod, while the girl who had slandered him—and who had, ever since, been demonized—was healed by the Saint in the sight of all, and thereafter disclosed the slander and openly confessed that she had lied.

Nor did the followers of Sabinus and Crescentinus, who had devised these slanders against the Saint, go unpunished. It was they who had shut the girl up in the Saint's cell while he was in Church offering up midnight prayers to God. At daybreak, they had run into the cell, brought the girl out from there, and persuaded her to denounce the Saint. However, when they appeared at the synod meeting, Sabinus and Crescentinus, together with their accomplices, were by God's command enveloped for a considerable time by a rushing of dark wind.

After the wind passed, their faces appeared darkened and their lips black-and-blue (and especially so the authors of the slander), such that they could not close their lips or say anything at all. In this way, they were openly chastised by God, and the families of both inherited the punishment thereafter, for they were condemned as unholy and none of them became ministers of the Lord.

D. From the *Gerontikon*



St. Gregory of Akragas

1. Abba Makarios recounted the following incident, which happened to him: "When I was young and was living in a cell in Egypt, I was taken to the city and made a clergyman. But because I did not want to accept this dignity, I fled to another place. I was joined by a pious layman who used to take my handiwork (to sell it) and who served me. It so happened that a maiden from a neighboring village, succumbing to temptation, fell into sin and became pregnant. When asked who was responsible for this, she replied: 'The anchorite.' All of the inhabitants of the village then came out and took me by force. They hung blackened pots and wooden spoons around my neck and led me through the streets of the village, beating me and saying: 'This "monk" seduced one of our girls. Away with him, away with him!' They beat me so severely that I nearly died. But a certain Elder came and said to the mob: 'How long will you go on beating this foreign monk?'

"The man who served me was following behind me, ashamed; for they were insulting him, too, and saying: 'You gave glowing reports of this anchorite, and look what he has gone and done!' And the girl's parents said: 'We will not release him, until he guarantees to support her.' I spoke to the man who had been serving me, and he stood surety for me. After they released me, I went to my cell with him and gave him all the baskets I had, saying: 'Sell these and give my woman something to eat.' And I told myself: 'Look, Makarios, you have found yourself a woman, and so you need to work a little harder in order to support her.' And I worked night and day, and sent the proceeds to her.

"When it came time for the wretch to give birth, she was in agony for many days and could not deliver. She therefore began to cry out and say: 'Have mercy on me, the wretched one; have mercy on me who fell into two vices: fornication and slander. I told lies against the anchorite and accused him falsely, for he had nothing to do with it; it was such and such a young man who seduced me.' When the man who ministered to me heard this, he came running to me and told me about it, adding; 'The whole village is coming to you to ask your forgiveness and to honor you.' But fearing the harm that comes from praise, I arose at once and fled to Sketis. This is the original reason that I came here."

2. An Elder had great love for his brothers and was very charitable. He never had any evil thoughts. Once a brother stole various items and took them and put them in the Elder's cell, without the latter knowing anything about the matter. After several days, the stolen objects were recognized and the Elder was accused of the theft. He made a prostra-

tion, saying; "Forgive me, I repent." A little later on, the brother who had stolen these items and hidden them in the Elder's cell came by and struck up a conversation with him. At one point, he said to the Elder: "Did you really steal these things?" In reply, the Elder made a prostration to him and said: "Forgive me." If ever any of the other brothers committed a sin and denied it, he himself would make a prostration and say: "Forgive me." This holy man was so pious and humble, that he never grieved anyone, even by a single word.

3. An Elder recounted that at the time of the great Isidore, the Presbyter of Sketis, there lived a brother who held the rank of Deacon. Abba Isidore had him ordained a Presbyter, on account of his surpassing virtue, in order that he might succeed him after his death. However, out of piety, the brother never assumed his duties as a Presbyter, but remained a Deacon. One of the Elders, through the scheming of the Enemy, envied this virtuous brother; so, he went to the Deacon's cell, when all the others had assembled in Church for services, and concealed his own book there. He then went to Abba Isidore and said to him: "One of the brothers stole my book." "No such thing has ever happened in Sketis," Abba Isidore answered him in astonishment.

Addressing the Presbyter, the Elder who had hidden the book said to him: "Send two of the Fathers with me so that we may search the cells." After first searching in the cells of the others, they next went to the Deacon's cell and, finding the book there, took it to the Presbyter in the Church and, in the presence and earshot of the Deacon, told him where they had found it. In front of all present, the Deacon made a prostration to Abba Isidore and said to him: "I have sinned; give me a penance." Abba Isidore gave him a penance not to commune for three weeks.

The brother then went to the monastic gathering and, standing before the Church, made a prostration to everyone, saying: "Forgive me, for I have fallen into sin." After three weeks, he was accepted back into communion. Immediately, however, the Elder who had slandered him became demonized and began to cry out and to confess the sin which he had committed, saying: "I slandered the servant of God." The entire congregation prayed for him, but he was not healed. Then the great Isidore told the Deacon, in front of all the brothers: "Pray for him; since you were slandered by him, only by you will he be healed." And indeed, when the Deacon prayed for him, the Elder was healed.

4. On Mount Sinai, there was, among the Fathers, one named Nikon.

Not far from him there lived an Egyptian, who had a daughter. One day, someone came to the Egyptian's dwelling. Finding the Egyptian gone and the daughter alone, he deflowered her. Afterwards, he told her to tell her father that Abba Nikon had done this to her. When the Egyptian returned and found out what had happened, his heart was filled with rage and grief and, taking a sword, he went to the Elder's cell. On arriving, he stood outside and knocked on the door. When the Elder emerged, the Egyptian raised his hand to strike him with his sword; but his hand was immediately withered.

Since he could not, therefore, kill the Elder, he went and denounced him to the Presbyters, who sent for and summoned the Elder. When he came, they gave him many blows and wanted to expel him from his skete. But he begged them, saying: "For God's sake, let me stay here, so that I may repent." After decreeing that he was not to partake of the Mysteries or come to Church for three years, they gave orders that no one was to visit him. For three years, he would kneel in repentance***** every Sunday at the entrance of the Church and implore everyone, saying: "Pray for me."

Later on, the man who had committed the sin and slandered the Elder became demonized; but after being scourged of the demon, he confessed everything in the Church, saying: "The servant of God knows nothing of this; it was I who committed the sin and told the girl to slander him." When they heard this, the people all went to the Elder, who was keeping silence in his cell, made a prostration to him, and said: "Forgive us, Abba." He replied to them: "May God forgive you; but I am not going to stay with you any longer, because not one of you was discerning enough to show me some sympathy." And the Elder at once departed from there.

I think that the Elder departed, not only on account of what he said to them—in rebuking them for their unsympathetic and undiscerning attitude and in urging them to correct themselves—but also in order to flee from the praise and glory which they would have accorded him from that time on, knowing his surpassing virtue and his Godly courage and nobility.

E. From Abba Isaiah

If you are slandered by anyone for any reason, do not be afraid, but make a prostration and say, "Forgive me, I will not do it again," whether or not you know the reason why you are being slandered.

F. From St. Maximos

When the demons see that we scorn the things of this world, in order that we may not hate men on account of such things and thereby fall away from love, they then stir up slanders against us, so that, unable to endure the sorrow, we might hate those who slander us. No pain is more grievous for the soul than slander, whether one is slandered for his faith or for his manner of life, and no one is capable of disregarding it, save him who looks to God as Susannah did (Susanna[h] 35).• For God alone can deliver us from difficult circumstances, just as He delivered her, and inform men of our innocence—as He did in her case—and comfort our souls with hope. To the extent that you pray from the heart for the one who slanders you, God will make the truth known to those who have been scandalized by the slander.

G. From St. Ephraim

If it happens that you are slandered, and the purity of your conscience is subsequently revealed, be not proud, but humbly serve the Lord Who has delivered you from the slander of men, lest you suffer a terrible fall.

* Cæsarea was an ancient city in Palestine between Tyre and Joppa. The Apostle Paul often passed through this city, where he was given hospitality in the home of the Apostle Philip and imprisoned for two years. After the country was captured by the Saracens, and during the campaigns of the Crusaders, the city was completely destroyed. It lies in ruins today.

** According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, one who is Baptized is delivered not only from the ancestral sin, but also from the other sins to which he may have succumbed in his life.

*** For a fuller account of this Divine Gregory the Wonderworker, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XI, p. 503.

**** Akragas [Latin, "Agrigentum"—*Trans.*] was a city in Sicily, situated on its southwestern coast and famous in antiquity. The Italians now call it "Agrigento." This Divine Gregory, who became Bishop therein, flourished in the reign of Justinian II Rhinotmetos (685-695 A.D.). For a fuller account of St. Gregory, see the *Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. XI, p. 594.

***** A custom in the ancient Church; such people were called "prostrators" or "genuflectors."

• Regarding Susannah, see the see the endnotes for Hypothesis XXIII, Book I.

Hypothesis XLVII

Concerning speech and silence, how and when to make use of them, and that idle talk is a sin.

A. From Palladios

When St. Pambo the Great was about to die, it is said that he remarked to the Presbyters Origen and Ammonios and to other holy men who were at his side: "From the time that I came to this desert, I have not repented, up until now, of any word that I have spoken; and in this state I am departing to God, as one who has not yet begun to serve Him." The aforementioned men recounted to me that, when asked by anyone about a Scriptural phrase or some other matter of a practical nature, the Saint never offered an immediate response, but would say that he had not yet found the answer. Three months would often go by, and he would not give an answer, saying that he had not yet understood the point at issue. Thus, he answered questions after much thought and as God willed; and thus, everyone accepted them with great awe, as if they came from God Himself.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "One man thinks that he is being silent, and yet his heart is judging others; such a man is always talking. Another man talks from morning until evening and yet keeps silence; that is, he says nothing that is not beneficial."

2. An Elder was asked: "What does it mean to give account for an idle word?" (St. Matthew 12:36). And he replied: "Any talk about bodily matters, beyond what is necessary, is idle talk; the only talk that is not idle is talk about the salvation of the soul. Nevertheless, even in this instance, it is better to keep silent as much as possible, for, no sooner do you talk about what is good, than evil also comes."

3. A brother visited a certain Elder and said to him: "Abba, give me a word, so that I may be saved." The Elder replied: "If you go to some-

one, do not hasten to speak before you consider what you are going to say." Filled with compunction at this saying, the brother made a prostration and remarked: "Truly, I have read many books, but never have I come across such learning." Thus edified, he departed.

4. It was said of Abba Ammoes that when he was going to Church, he would not allow his disciple to walk beside him, but only at a distance; and if he came to consult him about various thoughts, as soon as he had confessed them, the Elder would chase him away again, saying: "I do not allow you near me, lest, while we are talking about what is spiritually profitable, some irrelevant conversation may slip in."

5. It was said of Abba Ammoun that he once visited Abba Poimen and said to him: "If I go to my neighbor's cell, or he visits me for some need, we have fear in talking with each other, lest some irrelevant conversation should crop up." The Elder replied to him: "You do well, for young men need to be on their guard." Abba Ammoun then asked him: "What do the Elders do?" The Elder answered: "They do not have anything extraneous in themselves, or alien in their mouths, about which to speak." "If it should happen," Abba Ammoun asked again, "that I need to speak with my neighbor, do you want me to speak about the Scriptures or the words of the Elders?" Abba Poimen replied: "If you cannot be silent, it is better for you to speak about the words of the Elders and not about the Scriptures, for speaking about the latter poses no small danger for one who is not yet perfect."

6. Abba Isaiah said: "Wisdom does not consist in speaking; wisdom means knowing the time when you should speak and when to reply as necessary. Make it seem that you know nothing, although you have knowledge, so as to avoid great distress; for he who appears to have knowledge lays burdens on himself. Do not boast about your knowledge, for no one knows anything."

7. A brother asked Abba Matoes: "What am I to do, for my tongue afflicts me? When I go among men, I cannot control it, but I condemn them for every good deed and I reproach them. So, what am I to do?" The Elder said in reply: "If you cannot control yourself, flee into solitude; for this is a sickness. He who lives with brothers must not be square, but circular, so that he may fit in with everyone. It is not out of virtue that I live in solitude, but out of weakness; for the strong ones

are those who dwell among men."

8. Abba Joseph said: "While we were sitting at one time with Abba Poimen, he referred to Agathon as 'Abba.' So we said to him: 'He is still young; why do you call him "Abba"?' The Elder replied to us: 'His speech makes him worthy of being called "Abba."'"

9. An Elder said: "If you acquire silence, do not pride yourself on having attained to virtue, but say: 'I am unworthy even to speak.'"

10. One of the Fathers related to us that once some Elders were sitting and talking about matters of spiritual profit. One of them had the gift of clairvoyance, and he saw Angels agreeing with what they said and praising them; however, the moment that other conversation began, the Angels departed, and he saw pigs wallowing among them, full of stench and making them filthy. But when they conversed again about matters of spiritual profit, the Angels returned and praised them.

11. It was said of Abba Or that he never lied, or swore, or cursed anyone, or spoke unnecessarily.

12. The same Elder would constantly say to his disciple Paul: "Beware lest at any time you introduce irrelevant conversation into this cell."

C. From St. Ephraim

A monk will not remain for a long time in one place, nor will he find rest, unless he loves silence and self-control. He who speaks much among brothers will multiply quarrels and increase hatred towards himself; but when he restrains his lips, he will be loved. When he is contending, an athlete's mouth is clenched tight; as for you, keep your mouth tightly clenched, so as not to utter superfluous words, and you will have rest. He who speaks much among brothers will be hated, whereas he who keeps a watch over his mouth will be loved. He who keeps a watch over his mouth guards his soul, whereas he who is impetuous with his lips will either be ruined or will come close to ruin, as it says elsewhere in Scripture [*cf.* Proverbs 10:14]. A garden without a fence is trampled on and made desolate; and he who does not guard his mouth will forfeit his spiritual fruits. Concerning loquacity, understand,

O monk, that the end of ten thousand words is silence. If you prefer the profit, that is, silence, you will avoid harm. Silence is to a younger monk as a bridle is to a horse; he who is unbridled will fall into many evils.

D. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

A monk should say many things to God, but few to men; for immoderate loquacity, which distracts the mind, not only makes him idle with regard to spiritual work, but also surrenders him to the demon of listlessness. In every respect, therefore, silence is beneficial for us; for just as royal treasuries are filled with gold, so the minds of true monks are filled with Divine knowledge. If someone were to ask why Paul "continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7), we would say to him: first, because he was about to set out on a journey; and secondly, because his hearers had recently become catechumens. This was the start of his preaching, and they were in need of more support; but aside from this, Paul was full of the Divine Spirit, and it was not he speaking, but the Spirit Who spoke through him, as he himself says: "Or do ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me?" (II Corinthians 13:3).

Those who have within them the Holy Spirit do not speak when they wish, but when moved by the Spirit that dwells in them; such ones, even if they should talk a great deal, do not come to any harm, for they have the Grace of the Holy Spirit enlightening them and preserving the clarity of their minds. But for them, too, opportune and reasonable silence is more profitable. Signs of one who has the Holy Spirit in him are meekness, love of silence, humble-mindedness marked by great wisdom and knowledge, the lack of any appetite for worldly pleasure and glory, and an insatiable desire for heavenly things.

E. From Isaiah the Anchorite

If the need arises for you to speak with your brother, do so very quietly, with humility and reverence—since God is always watching over us—and do not seek to say or hear anything that is not of benefit to you. Not holding oneself in esteem, remaining unknown, and maintaining silence indicate that a man is not preoccupied with his passions and doing his will, but is concerned, rather, to do God's Will; but he who wishes to hold forth before many people shows that the fear of God is not in him. For the fear of God is a guard and a help for the soul that collects the mind, so that it may destroy all of its enemies. A man who pays at-

tention to his tongue shows that he is practiced in virtue, whereas an undisciplined tongue betokens one who does not possess inner virtue. If one guards his mouth, he raises his mind to God, provided that he consciously maintains silence; but loquacity engenders carelessness and rashness.

Brother, make sure that your soul is always in a state of mourning, that it is humble, and that it laments over itself. Always be silent, and do not speak at all unless it is necessary, as if you were an unworthy and ignorant man. Should the need arise for you to speak, and you are first convinced that there is good reason to speak and that it is God's Will that you should speak rather than remain silent, then open your mouth with fear and trembling; keep your face down and let your conversation be sober and humble. When you encounter someone, talk to him a little for the sake of love, but be quick to resume your silence. If you are asked about something, be obedient and reply only to this question, and say nothing further.

F. From St. Diadochos

Just as, when the doors of the baths are left continually open, the heat inside is quickly driven out, so also the soul, when it wishes to say many things, even though everything that it says may be good, disperses its concentration through the door of the voice. Hence, the soul, deprived of suitable spiritual ideas, loses the strength to struggle against thoughts and babbles with anyone it encounters. Since in this way (through loquacity) the soul drives out the Holy Spirit, it cannot keep the intellect free from harmful fantasies; for the Good Spirit always flees from loquacity, which is the cause of every upset and fantasy. Timely silence is good, since it is nothing other than the mother of the wisest thoughts.

G. From St. Maximos

He who hypocritically feigns silence for the sake of malice devises trickery before his neighbor; if he is unsuccessful in his trickery, he is turned away, adding sorrow to his passion. He who maintains silence for a beneficial purpose increases friendship and will go away rejoicing, for he will have received the enlightenment which dispels darkness. He who, at a gathering, impetuously interrupts the presentation makes it clear that he suffers from a love of glory. Dominated by this

disease, he puts forward countless proposals, for he desires to interrupt the continuity of the discussion.

H. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Abba Joseph asked Abba Nisthero: "What am I to do with my tongue, for I cannot control it?" In turn the Elder Nisthero asked: "Is it that you find peace when you talk?" Abba Joseph said: "No." Elder Nisthero thus answered: "Well, if you do not find peace, why do you talk? It is preferable for you to be silent; and if a conversation ever occurs, rather than talking, listen."

2. Abba Poimen said: "If, in every place that you dwelled, you were silent, you would have peace."

3. Two brothers from Sketis wanted to visit Abba Anthony. They embarked on a boat, and with them embarked a certain Elder, whom the brothers did not know and who was likewise going to visit Abba Anthony. As they sat on the boat, the brothers discussed what the Fathers say about Scripture and also talked about their handiwork. The Elder was silent.

After they had disembarked from the boat and reached their destination, Abba Anthony said to the brothers: "You found good company in this Elder." Then he said to the Elder: "You had good brothers travelling with you, Abba." The Elder replied: "They are good, but their house has no door; anyone who wants to can enter the stable and untie the ass." He said this in order to show that they had said whatever came into their mouths.

4. It was said of Abba Agathon, that for three years he kept a stone in his mouth, until he attained to silence. Behold this struggler and either emulate the Elder's perseverance or, if you cannot emulate it, humble yourself.*

5. Abba Poimen said that if a man recalls the Scriptural saying, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (St. Matthew 12:37), he will choose rather to be silent.

6. The same Elder said that a brother asked Abba Pambo if it was good to praise one's neighbor, and the Abba replied: "It is better to be

silent."

7. Abba Sisoes said: "Behold, for thirty years I have not besought God about any other sin, except to pray to Him, saying: 'O Lord Jesus, protect me from my tongue'; yet, until this very time, I fall every day because of it, sinning by way of my tongue."

I. From Abba Isaac

There are three reasons why a man might desire to be ever silent and to preserve stillness: either for the glory that comes from men; or from a fervent zeal for virtue; or because such a man converses inwardly with God and this conversation occupies all of his thoughts. If one is not possessed of one of the latter two desires, namely, the second and the third, then he is of necessity afflicted by the first ailment. If you guard your tongue, God will give you the gift of compunction of heart, whereby you will behold your soul—that is, the light of the mind—and be filled with the joy of the Spirit. But if your tongue conquers you, you will never be able to escape from darkness. If you do not have a pure heart, at least have a pure mouth, as one of the Saints said.

* The second sentence, here, is not found in any of the other versions of this aphorism; it well may be an editorial comment by Father Paul, the compiler of *The Evergetinos* —*Trans.*

Hypothesis XLVIII

That simply taking an oath is sinful and that perjury is punished without fail; that we must renege on any oath which has been taken impetuously for the purpose of violating one of God's commandments and repent for it.

A. From the Life of St. Evthymios

A certain shepherd by the name of Kyriakos, who hailed from the village of Pharan,* used to pasture his flock in the desert regions. Another man, who came from the same village and was equally poor, entrusted him with ten other sheep to graze along with his own. After some time had elapsed, the poor shepherd faced a great difficulty. Not possessing anything else, he at once thought about selling this small flock, compelled by necessity.

However, since Kyriakos was apparently a malicious man who preferred the smallest profit to the truth, he returned only eight sheep to the poor man, alleging that this was the number of sheep that he had originally received from him. But the poor man asked insistently for the other two. Kyriakos refused, and they both began to quarrel and argue fiercely with each other. Some people then appeared in their midst to reconcile them. They proposed that whichever of them was willing should swear an oath that he was telling the truth, so as to put an end to the wrangling. Kyriakos agreed to swear an oath. The poor man requested that the oath be sworn before the reliquary of St. Evthymios the Great, and a day was designated for this purpose. On that day, then, Kyriakos went down to the monastery, along with the poor man, with the intention of committing perjury.

After traversing on foot the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, they came in sight of the monastery. Seeing that Kyriakos was determined to take a false oath, which he had on the tip of his tongue, the poor man was frightened, as if he were the one who was going to swear—or rather, perjure himself—and he said to Kyriakos: "Come on, brother, let us return, because your decision to take an oath is sufficient for me to prove your credibility, and so I do not require anything further." Having uttered these words, he implored Kyriakos not to swear an oath. But

Kyriakos would have none of it; on the contrary, he thought that he would accomplish nothing unless he actually perjured himself.

When they arrived at the monastery, he dared to commit that fearful act before the Saint's reliquary: that is, he swore a false oath. "The fool," true to himself, "hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 13:1).** But Kyriakos outdid the fool, since, having forgotten that God existed, he thought that God would forget him. After this outrage, he returned to his house, foolishly gratified by the profit of his perjury, as if it were some windfall. On the following day, as he was sitting awake on his bed at midnight, the door of his house seemed to open of its own accord and a certain monk entered, accompanied by five young men. This monk was holding a staff in his right hand, while illuminating the house with much light. He looked grimly at Kyriakos and said to him in a stern voice: "What is this that you have dared to do, you wretch, before the Relics of Evthymios?"

Kyriakos remained totally speechless and could not find anything to say in his defense. Then the monk who had appeared handed him over to his companions, with the order that they punish him. Four of them stretched him out, and to the fifth the monk gave his staff and commanded him to beat Kyriakos severely, so that he might learn in the future neither to despise God nor to swear false oaths—nor to seize other people's possessions.

After Kyriakos had been given an adequate drubbing, the monk stayed the young man's hand, so as to stop the beating, grabbed Kyriakos by the hair, and said to him: "Have you not yet realized, you impious man, that there is a God Who punishes these evil deeds on earth? Behold, 'this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall those things be' which you stole so wickedly from the poor man? (St. Luke 12:20). This is why I have brought this punishment upon you, so that others might mend their ways when they learn about it and might thereby avoid the danger of perjury—although it is preferable that they not swear oaths at all, even if they intend to speak the truth."

After he had intimidated Kyriakos sufficiently and said all these things to him, the monk immediately vanished, along with his companions. Disturbed by the vision and unable to endure the pain of the blows, Kyriakos began to cry out loudly and summon his relatives to his side. When they had run to him, he showed them the wounds, ardently confessed his perjury, and bewailed his calamity before them. He then begged them to carry him to the Saint's Relics, because, as he said, he (the Saint) who had chastised him so much with these unbearable blows

would be able to heal him more easily, since he was a disciple of Him Whose nature it is to do good rather than to punish; for physicians and their skill do not avail to heal such dreadful pains.

When his relatives heard this and saw how severely he had been beaten, they themselves were quite frightened. However, complying with the man's wish, they devised the following means to transport him: They filled two sacks with chaff, which they tied securely to the flanks of an ass. They then positioned him between these sacks, and in this way carried him to the monastery and brought him before the holy Relics.

Those who transported Kyriakos recounted to us everything that happened—showing us the blows (from the drubbing) which he had sustained on his back—and put such fear into the brothers that, ever since then, they have not permitted anyone either to take an oath over the Saint's Relics or to exact an oath from anyone else.

Kyriakos' relatives stayed with us for the whole day. But when they saw that he was losing even these very feeble and slender hopes of survival and that he was nearing death—since his intestines were loose and his mouth could not hold back his vomit even for a short time—they picked him up and carried him back to his house, where he barely made it through the night and died the following day.

B. From the *Gerontikon*

Abba Zosimas related the following story: "Once, when I was visiting the Holy City,*** a certain Christ-loving person approached me and said to me: 'I have a brother living with me and, through the influence of the Evil One, a certain enmity arose between us; although I have subsequently repented, he does not wish to be reconciled to me. Please, for the Lord's sake speak to him, so that we may be reconciled.' When I heard this, I at once summoned the brother and spoke to him in terms that were conducive to love and harmony. At first he seemed to be convinced, but after further reflection he said to me: 'I cannot be reconciled to him, because I swore on the Cross that henceforth I would remain implacable towards him.'

"On hearing about his oath, I smiled and said to him: 'Your oath, brother, has as much meaning as if you were to say: "O my Christ, by Thy Precious Cross, I shall not keep Thy commandments, but shall do the will of Thine enemy, the Devil." Not only, therefore, are you under no obligation to keep the oath which you wrongly took, brother, but you

ought to repent and feel sorry for it and condemn your rashness, lest you be ensnared by it again in the future. For if Herod had repented and not abided by his oath, he would not have committed that most terrible murder, by beheading the Forerunner of Christ.' Moved to compunction by these remarks, the brother made a prostration both to his brother and to me, and in this way, by the Grace of God, they were reconciled."

* This Pharan was a village situated near the Lavra of St. Evthymios; with regard to the other Pharan, see the endnotes for Hypothesis XVIII, above.

** The sacred writer alludes, here, to the words of David, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," and compares Kyriakos to a fool. That is, just as he, in his folly, says in his heart that there is no God, so also Kyriakos, forgetting that God is a Righteous Judge, perjured himself before the Relics of St. Evthymios. However, as we see in what followed, the justice of God was not slow in punishing the perjurer.

*** Jerusalem is called the "Holy City."

Hypothesis XLIX

That we should not only not calumniate anyone, but should not even put up with one who calumniates others; and that we should not whisper or murmur about others.

A. From the Life of St. Synkletike

The Blessed Synkletike said: "Calumny is a very serious and pernicious sin; and yet, for some people, it is their nourishment and recreation. Do not, O faithful nun, become a vessel of other people's evils, but keep your soul pure. For when you entertain the foul words of one who maligns others, through your thoughts you will defile your prayer with impurity and without due cause you will hate those whom you encounter. When your ears are filled with the misanthropy of those who speak ill of others, then you will view everyone with hostility and will think that everyone is equally impure, just as our eyes, when they are dazzled by some overpowering color, cannot, for a while, distinguish between the things which they see.

"We should, therefore, guard our tongues and our ears, lest we say anything bad about our neighbor, and we should not consent to hear anything similar. For Scripture says: 'Thou shalt not receive a vain report' (Exodus 23:1); and elsewhere: 'Whoso privily slandered his neighbor, him did I drive away from me' (Psalm 100:5); and again, in another place: 'That my mouth may not speak the works of men' (Psalm 16:4). Yet, we speak of things that men have not even done. We should, therefore, neither give credence to what people say nor entertain such at all; but we should say, in accordance with the Prophet: 'And I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs' (Psalm 37:15)."

B. From the *Gerontikon*

1. Some heretics went to Abba Poimen and began to speak ill of the Archbishop of Alexandria, saying that he had received his Consecration from Presbyters. The Elder immediately summoned the brother who was with him and said: "Set the table, give them something to eat, and send them on their way in peace."

2. A brother asked an Elder: "What is calumny and what is condemnation?" The Elder answered: "Calumny has to do with invisible and secret sins, whereas condemnation pertains to wholly obvious sins. Any word, then, which one cannot utter in front of his brother is calumny. For example, if someone were to say, 'such and such a brother is virtuous and good, but he is careless and lacks discretion,' this constitutes calumny. If someone were to say, 'That brother pretends to be busy and is avaricious,' this constitutes condemnation; for he has condemned that brother's deeds and his whole life, and this is worse than calumny."

3. An Elder said: "If you speak ill of your brother and you are stricken in your conscience, make a prostration to him and say, 'I have maligned you,' and make sure that you are not deceived in the future; for calumny is death to the soul."

4. The same Elder said: "If a brother maligns a brother in your presence, be careful not to encumber him by saying: 'Yes, it is so.' Either be silent or say to him: 'I am condemned, brother, and I cannot judge anyone else'; in this way you save both yourself and him."

C. From Antiochos (author of the *Pandects*)

Brothers, let us flee from murmuring, lest it deprive us of Paradise and send us into the Gehenna of fire; for it was by murmuring that the serpent expelled Eve from Paradise.

D. From Isaiah the Anchorite

If a brother hastens to malign his brother, do not allow yourself to be influenced by him out of embarrassment, thereby sinning against God, but say to him in humility: "Forgive me, brother, I am a wretch. What you say applies to me, too, and I cannot endure it." If *you* are tempted to speak ill of your brother, bear in mind that if he hears about your calumny, he will be distressed. Thus, you will be deterred from accounting to him and you will have peace.

E. From Isaac the Syrian

Let your mouth always be persistent in pronouncing blessings and

you will assuredly not be reviled. For revilement begets revilement and blessing begets blessing. The day that you open your mouth and speak ill of someone, consider yourself a dead man and all your works futile, even though you may think that you spoke in sincerity of heart and for his edification. For, it is not necessary for one to demolish his own house in order to build someone else's. Indeed if, in your presence, someone is incited to malign his brother, don a countenance of displeasure, and you will thus be found prudent before God and before him.

You are unable to stop the mouth of one who calumniates his neighbor? At least keep yourself from having anything to do with him. Know that if fire comes forth from you and burns others, God will demand an accounting from your hands for the souls that are burned by your fire. If, on the other hand, though you do not give off fire, yet you agree with the one who ignited it and take pleasure in this, in the Judgment you will be reckoned his accomplice.

F. From St. Maximos

Do not lend your ear to one who speaks ill of others, nor your tongue to the ears of a censorious person by gladly listening to gossip against your neighbor, lest you fall away from Divine love and forfeit eternal life. Do not tolerate any revilement of your spiritual Father, and do not encourage one who dishonors him, lest the Lord be angered at your deeds and remove you from the land of the living (*cf.* Deuteronomy 6:15). Stop the mouth of one who maligns others in your hearing, lest you commit a twofold sin along with him, by habituating yourself to a destructive passion and by not preventing him from prating against his neighbor. One who speaks in a dispassionate way about a brother's sin does so for two reasons: either in order to correct him, or in order to benefit someone else. If he speaks about the sin for any other reason than these, either to the brother or to someone else, he does this either to insult him or to ridicule him, and he will not escape being forsaken by God; and he will, without fail, fall into the same sin or another sin, and, censured and rebuked by others, will be put to shame.

When you see proud men unable to tolerate the praise being given to men who are better than they and, contriving to suppress the truth that is being spoken, stifling it with countless aspersions and wicked slanders, please understand that the Lord is being crucified and buried by these men and guarded by soldiers and seals. But the Word rises again and overturns them. He shines forth evermore when He is at-

St. Isaac the Syrian

tacked, being steeled for dispassion through sufferings; for since He both is, and is called, the Truth, He is stronger than all things.

G. From the *Gerontikon*

1. An Elder said: "Just as one who receives fire in his bosom is consumed by it, so also he who associates with many people will not avoid calumny."

2. Abba Hyperechios said: "It is better to eat meat and drink wine than to eat the flesh of one's brothers by speaking ill of them."

3. The same Elder said: "It was by murmuring that the serpent drove Eve out of Paradise; he who maligns his neighbor is like the serpent, for, along with his own soul, he also destroys the soul of anyone who listens to him."

4. The same Elder said: "Let your mouth not utter an evil word; for a vine does not bear thorns."

5. An Elder was asked: "What is calumny?" And he replied: "It is ignorance of God and His glory and envy of one's neighbor."

H. From St. Ephraim

Brother, do not put up with someone who maligns others, even if he is speaking the truth, lest you suffer the same calamity as he. For, if it happens that someone speaks the truth in saying that the king has sinned and is evil, none of the bystanders will endure hearing such comments against the king; for if a bystander is content to stand and listen, there is a punishment in store for both the speaker *and* him. The former is put to death for what he says and the latter for what he hears. The liar accuses someone, you incline your ear to him, and the death which he emits through his mouth is received by your ears; and after accepting the yeast of falsehood, you knead your heart with it.

From what source did death enter into mankind? Was it not through hearing, through which Eve accepted the words of the serpent? It is through this sense, from that time up until now, that ruin always finds a door to enter. For, the Devil can destroy one who is silent through one who speaks, and he whom he cannot destroy through the mouth he de-

stroys through the ear. The Savior did not consent to hear the truth when it was spoken by demons.

The Apostles, too, did not consent to hear a demon praising them, lest his venomous voice take root in their pure ears and, because of this, their hearing should become impervious to falsehood. For the crafty one is in the habit of mixing falsehood with truth and thus, deceiving those who are more simple, hurling them down into the pit of perdition. When a serpent eats something sweet, he immediately transforms it into something bitter; and if he transmits it to someone, woe to him who receives it.

In this way, the Devil concocts falsehood from truth and transmits it in the form of deadly poison. For in his sweetest words there is concealed a grievous and pernicious bitterness, which most people do not notice. In this way, the Iscariot, concealing treachery in the kiss of his mouth and on his peaceful tongue, succeeded in betraying the Master Who knows the heart. And if the Deceiver appeared in such a way to the Creator, how will he appear to you? The Savior surrendered Himself to death, but He did not surrender His ears to the voice of the Deceiver.

When the Savior opened His mouth, He tasted vinegar with gall, but He did not allow His ears to hear the words of the Unclean One. He gave His mouth to be kissed by the traitor, but He gave no reply to the Deceiver. Give your mouth to the liar to kiss, but do not lend him your ears. For a kiss condemns him, while the taste of his words will kill you if you listen to him. You will do better if you completely avoid the smell and taste of his venom.

Why are you quick to flee from smoke, yet glad to listen to a liar? Do you refuse the stench, and yet sit beside the accuser? You have an obligation to protect each of your members from what is harmful. If your body is innocent of fornication, keep your mouth from calumny. Your mouth may be unable to commit adultery, but it can lie and slander and thereby involve you in the same perdition. For if one of your members is guilty, you are entirely condemned on account of that condemned member.

A soldier has his whole body encased in a suit of iron armor; yet, if a single, very small aperture appears in the armor and provides an arrow with a point of entry, it brings death upon a brave man. So also with the door of the ear; if a calumniator finds it open, the man who accepts his words suffers the most terrible destruction. This door is so great that death, in all of its immensity, went through it and entered the world; it has since been swallowing all the generations of mankind and

still remains insatiable. Your ears should be shut with bolts and bars, so that no accusation may enter them. Do not ignore calumny as something trivial and incapable of causing destruction.

Mariam* became white as snow from leprosy, condemned as she was for a single word of accusation. And if she, being a prophetess, paid a terrible penalty for talking too freely, how great will be the punishment for those who have recourse to other kinds of calumny? And although Mariam spoke the truth, this truth was rejected, since she expressed it in an accusatory way. Likewise, if one is right in speaking negatively about other people, his righteousness is full of unrighteousness; either rebuke someone justly or at least do not accuse him in secret. For righteousness is discredited when wickedness and craftiness are mixed up with it, just as food kills if it has poison concealed in it.

Let us learn what is not apparent from what is apparent, and let us discern the truth that is depicted by Mariam. For her entire body was afflicted with leprosy, since she had sinned with all her heart in a way that was not apparent. Through the injuries that appeared on her body, she became aware of the injury that she had sustained without realizing it. Through this most unpleasant outbreak of leprosy, she learned how evil and detestable it is to bring accusations against others, and her visible body became the mirror of the invisible soul within her. Through the corruption of her flesh, she was taught how the heart that loves calumny is corrupted; through her outer man, she understood what her inner man had suffered.

Just as she was divided from her brother, so also was her very body divided from herself, so that through herself she might learn how great a good is our unity with love. Her members were at odds with her, since she was at odds with her brother, so that through this adversity of her body she might be zealous to acquire peace and harmony with her neighbor.

* The sister of Moses and Aaron in the Old Testament was called "Mariam" (Miriam). She was a prophetess and the leader of the women of Israel who sang the hymn of thanksgiving to God after the annihilation in the Red Sea of the Egyptians, who were pursuing the Israelites that had emigrated from Egypt (Exodus 15:20-21). It was probably she who carried to the Nile the basket, or ark, in which the infant Moses lay and who watched over it (Exodus 2:4-5; Numbers 26:59; Micah 6:4). Because she was envious of Moses, she was punished through a temporary attack of leprosy (Numbers 12; Deuteronomy 24:11). She died and was buried in Cades (Numbers 20:1).

Hypothesis L

How brothers who live together should correct each other, when they fall into various sins; when, and concerning what kinds of sins, they should keep silent, and when, and concerning which ones, they should speak and not conceal them.

A. From St. Barsanouphios

Questions and Answers

1. A brother asked an Elder: "My Abba has given me instructions to disclose to him the sins of the brothers. But I realize that this causes grief to some of the brothers. What should I do, then, so that I do not suffer harm? My mind does not condemn me, since it takes into account the purpose, for I am not telling them to the Abba out of passion. However, I fear lest this matter lead me into some excess and cause me harm."

The Elder replied to him: "If you do what you do from a pure heart, for spiritual benefit and for the cutting off of the passions, then do not worry about the words of men, since you are not harmed by them. For, to reveal the sins of the brothers to the Abba dispassionately is a good thing. Not all have the capacity to speak to the Abba, nor is it to their advantage. So if you speak in a Godly way, you are not speaking or acting from yourself, but you are in every way an instrument of God. What is good according to God does not give rise to jealousy or envy; and if for a moment these things are manifested in the soul, they quickly disappear."

2. The brother asked again: "If someone else tells the brother (about what is reported to the Abba), should one inform this brother that it was said out of love for him, and not out of hatred, or should he keep silent?"

The Elder answered: "It is out of vainglory that he wants to inform him, so that he may not be considered a slanderer by men, but a righteous man. Let him examine his heart carefully, so that he may confirm whether he acted in a Godly manner by referring the matter to the Abba, wishing to benefit the brother. If this really is the case, let him leave it all to God, and He, as He knows, will inform the heart of the brother. If,

again, this brother says to him, either himself or through another, that he has learned what was said about him to the Abba and is distressed about it, then he is obligated to inform him with humility. 'God knows, brother,' he should tell him, 'that I said these things to the Abba because I love you and I want to benefit you. For tell me, what benefit would I have derived hereby, if I had said these things for any other purpose? Do you suppose that I do not fear the awful declaration of God, that he who hates his brother is a murderer (I St. John 3:15)? Since I had in mind Him Who says, 'Try to save your brother as yourself' (*cf.* St. Matthew 19:19), I sought to correct you, too, for the sake of Him Who says: 'When a brother is helped by a brother, he is like a strong and fortified city' (Proverbs 18:19). I beseech you, if you should see some sin of mine, to reprove *me*, so that in this way I may feel shame and repent for my sin.'

"If, again, he said these things to the Abba, not because he wanted to correct his brother, but in order to accuse him, he is obligated to condemn himself first and to implore God to forgive him.

"Then, if he knows for sure that the brother understood this, he ought to go and meet him, make a prostration before him with humility, and confess his sin. 'Forgive me, brother,' he should say, 'for I was mocked by demons and I accused you. Beseech, for my sake, that the Lord will forgive me and grant me time for repentance, for I was lured into deception.' It is not possible for him to inform the brother with a lie, but he ought to tell him the whole truth.

"If, however, the brother was entirely unaware of it, let him not say anything to him, so as not to put thoughts into his mind; but he is obligated to repent before God for his sin and confess it to the Abba."

3. The same brother asked the same Elder again: "If a brother asks me about some word or action, and I know about it—either because I heard it or have experience of it—should I answer him or not? If, again, I am not asked, but realize that something is not being done properly, would it be correct to point out, just one time, to the one responsible that he is not doing right, or not?"

The Elder replied to him: "Make sure that you are not speaking out of vainglory, but with humility and fear of God. And concerning all of those things that you asked me, you should speak and remind people, if the need arises, but you should do so in your *cœnobion* and nowhere else; for the monks of a *cœnobion* are as a single body. If you are somewhere else, say nothing from your own initiative; if you are asked, answer with humility."

4. The brother asked again: "If I perceive that my heart is gratified by vainglory as I speak, or that, though it is not gratified at the time, I realize that it is going to experience gratification later on, should I then keep silent or not?"

The Elder replied: "If anyone speaks with humility, it means that he must be speaking, not in order to instruct, but in order to say what he has heard from the Abba or the Fathers. If the brother is benefited hereby and vainglory wars against you by suggesting gratification, pay attention to yourself, because the Devil wants to prevent your brother from receiving benefit—and if you listen to this advice, he will not allow any brother to be benefited. You should reproach your vainglory and despise it, and after saying what you have to say to your brother, you should repent before God. 'Forgive me, O Lord,' you should say, 'for I spoke with vainglory.' You should do the same thing whenever the thought of vainglory comes to you subsequently."

5. The brother said: "How is it, Father, that you have allowed me, if I see something unreasonable, to speak even before being asked, whereas the Fathers advise one not to reply if he is not asked?"

The Elder answered: "Brother, the Elders are speaking in accordance with the measure (that is, the spiritual maturity) of a man. There is, therefore, a time when it is appropriate for a brother to *serve* a man through submission and obedience—that is, when he is young and incomplete—and at this time he should produce deeds. There is, on the other hand, another time, when this man attains to the state of *being served*, in which case the measures of this period are different. What is perfect is ascribed to the perfect, while other things are ascribed to those still under the law; for they are still under the direction of a tutor."

6. The brother asked: "Someone does something that is not sinful in nature; but, on account of my will, I am distressed with him. Should I keep silent and not satisfy my heart, or should I speak with love so that I may not be disturbed in my soul? If this matter distresses others and not me, should I speak for the sake of the others? Or is this perhaps a trick of the Devil?"

The Elder replied: "If it is a matter that does not involve sin, that is, which is morally neutral, and you speak in order to still your heart, this constitutes a defeat for you, because from your weakness you were not able to restrain yourself. Accuse yourself and be silent. If, again, this matter distresses others, tell your Abba, and either he himself will tell

him, or he will tell you what to say to him, and you will be freed from anxiety."

7. The brother said: "If I want to say something to the Abba that does not concern myself, but since others are distressed, and I understand that the brother (concerning whom I want to speak) is disturbed, what should I do? If, again, I, along with the others, am distressed about this matter, should I tell the Abba in order to calm the others, or should I keep silent so as not to give satisfaction to myself?"

The Elder replied: "If you tell the Abba about the disturbance of the brother, when the need arises, you do not have responsibility for it. If the incident does not distress you, mention it to the Abba, so that you may calm the others. But if you are distressed in the same way as they are, even if you are concerned for them, nonetheless, for your sake alone, so that you will not indulge your feeling, force yourself not to mention it."

8. The brother said: "My mind tells me that if the brother is disturbed, he becomes my enemy, with the justification that I accused him to the Abba."

The Elder responded: "This thought is evil, since it wants to impede the correction of the brother, as I told you before. Do not listen to it, but speak in a Godly manner and not for the purpose of accusation. Sick people murmur against their doctors while they are undergoing treatment; but the doctors are not concerned about this present murmuring, because they know that later on, after the ill are cured, their patients will thank them."

9. The brother asked: "If I see that my mind wants me to speak to the Abba, not for the benefit of the brother, but for the purpose of accusing him, should I speak or be silent?"

The Elder answered: "Advise your mind to speak in a Godly way, and not so as to accuse. But if your mind is still overcome by censoriousness, then speak to the Abba, confessing your own inability, so that the two of you may be healed: your brother from his sin and you from censoriousness."

10. The brother said: "If my mind does not allow me to confess to the Abba that I am saying these things with the purpose of accusing my brother, what should I do? Should I say them or not?"

The Elder answered: "Do not tell him anything, and the Lord will

take care of it; for there is no need for you to speak to the detriment of your soul; and God, as He wills, will take care of correcting the brother."

11. The brother asked: "As for the brother who has sinned, about whom I or someone else spoke to the Abba, what attitude should he have towards the one who spoke to the Abba about him?"

The Elder replied: "If he is faithful and lives in a Godly manner, then, even if the one who spoke to the Abba about him did so out of enmity, he ought to think, 'The brother who spoke wanted to help me hereby'; thus to him is applicable the saying: 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things' (St. Matthew 12:35). And when he has these thoughts, he ought to love his brother more and thank him. He who behaves in this way will make swift progress in God."

12. The brother asked: "If the brothers serving with me in the infirmary commit sins, how should I correct them?"

The Elder answered: "If you engrave the Will of God deep in your heart, you will not be disturbed, for you are doing your duty, like the Fathers. If you are heedless and are lured aside like a man, confess to God with repentance: 'Forgive me, Master, and have mercy on me.' And to those who are with you, you should say: 'Pay attention, my brothers, because we are condemned by these things and we lose our souls.' Make sure you do not talk loudly, when you speak, but very quietly, as if you are speaking to the ear of each one separately. If your heart is changed hereby, you will come into a Godly state of mind."

13. The brother asked: "Father, I beg you, tell me how correction should be carried out and when I should pretend to be indifferent, that is, play the fool and overlook what has happened. And if I am overcome by something and am led astray and disturbed, what bond should I fix for myself—that is, what penance should I impose on myself?"

The Elder responded: "You should always act according to the people in question. If you see that a brother under your authority is sensible, but is agitated towards you when he does his tasks, tell him: 'Brother, if we do the work of God with negligence, we will lose our souls. Did you do your task properly? Make sure that from here on you do a good job.' However, if he is not wise but heedless, say to him: 'I assure you, brother, that you need to be chastised. Are you this negligent in doing your duties? If I tell the Abba, that is, the Abbot, he will pun-

ish you suitably.'

"With regard to feigning indifference, do so in accordance with the sin. If it is small, play the fool, as though you did not see it; but not when the sin is great. Do not impose any restriction on yourself because of your failure, but do not be indifferent either; when you are defeated, beseech God to forgive you. If you are indifferent, then you fall into negligence."

14. The brother said: "If one of the brothers with me, or one of the invalids himself, sins, should I speak severely to him when I want to correct him, or should I make a prostration? If he gets angry and leaves the infirmary, what should I do? In general, for what kinds of sins should I make a prostration? For arrogance and power darken the mind and do not allow one to reprove himself and make a prostration before his brother. If, again, someone makes a prostration, vainglory immediately ensues and inflates the one who made the prostration with the thought that perhaps he has done a good deed."

The Elder replied: "When you are bothered, do not say anything; for the bad does not engender the good. What is said with an agitated heart does not give rest to the one who hears it—nor does it correct him. You should be forbearing until your mind is calm, and then you should speak peaceably. If the brother is persuaded, that is good; if, on the other hand, he is not persuaded, tell him: 'If you want, I shall mention it to the Abba, and let us do what he judges to be correct,' and then you will be at peace. But if he departs in anger, tell the Abba, and he will impose a punishment on him. In this case, do not make a prostration before him, because you will make him suspect that you really erred in speaking thus to him, and he will fight against you all the more.

"As for the other brothers who are not under your supervision in the same obedience, where you see a fault, quickly do what is fitting. If your sin is great, make a prostration to your brother; but if it is small, say to him orally, 'Forgive me, brother,' and make a prostration to him mentally, in your heart. Be very much on your guard against pride and the prerogatives of your authority, because these two things do not allow a man to make progress; one can, indeed, make a prostration out of vainglory. When you despise these three things—pride, prerogatives of authority, and vainglory—make prostrations, wherever appropriate, with humility, fear of God, and discernment. Do what you can, and God will help you, by the prayers of His Holy Fathers. To Him be all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

END OF THE SECOND BOOK OF *THE EVERGETINOS*

AND TO GOD THE GLORY

❄ AMEN ❄

Glossary of General Terms in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity*

Abba: Aramaic word for "Father," used as a title for monks and other clergy.

Abbess: The spiritual Mother of a convent. (See "Spiritual Mother.")

Abbot: The spiritual Father of a monastery (often a simple monk). (See "Spiritual Father.")

Amma: Feminine form of "Abba," or "Mother," used as a title for nuns.

Anchorite: A monastic living in solitude and isolation from other monastics.

Archbishop: Bishop of a large or important diocese with the distinction of being an Archdiocese; a Bishop with this honorary title. (See "Bishop.")

Archimandrite: The highest rank below that of Bishop, given to a Hieromonk. (See "Hieromonk.")

Bishop: The head of a diocese or local Church. In the Christian East, all Bishops, regardless of rank or administrative authority, are considered equal in doctrinal authority. They may not be married at the time of their Consecrations. In ascending administrative rank, episcopal titles are: Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, and Patriarch. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Patriarch of Constantinople holds the title of "Œcumenical Patriarch," or "*Primus inter Pares*" (the first among equals). (See "Priest.")

Brother: A term for monastics in general; in Eastern Christian tradition, the term is used for novices and by monks and Bishops in addressing one another privately. Formally, unlike in the West, all monks in the East are called "Father," following their Tonsure. (See "Tonsure.")

Cœnobion: A monastic community in which monks or nuns live in a common compound, take meals together, and worship in common. They also hold all things in common and are governed by an Abbot or Abbess or a similar superior.

Cœnobite: One who lives in a *cœnobion*.

Commune: To partake of the Eucharist. In modern Eastern Christian practice, the Eucharist is administered from the Bread and Wine (Body and Blood), which are intermingled in the Chalice, with a liturgical spoon.

Confession: The Mystery of confessing one's sins to a Priest, followed by a prayer of forgiveness or absolution. Also, the sharing of sins or spiritual concerns with

an Elder or spiritual advisor, including spiritual Fathers and spiritual Mothers, though without the bestowal of the formal prayers of absolution.

Convent: A community of nuns. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

Council: A gathering of Bishops from one or more of the local Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or examining doctrinal matters. Councils of this kind are often called "Pan-Orthodox Councils." Their decisions are considered binding and valid only when they are in concord with the decisions of the Œcumenical Synods and the traditional doctrines of the Orthodox Church. Councils are sometimes referred to as "Synods." (See "Œcumenical Synod.")

Deacon: See "Priest."

Desert: Any isolated wilderness area; the sense of isolation cultivated by monastic men or women, regardless of their geographical location.

Desert Fathers: An inclusive term for male and female monastics (sometimes called Desert Mothers), usually in reference to the Egyptian desert and the Abbas and Ammas who lived there. (See "Sketis.") The term can be more generally applied to monastics living in any isolated area.

Eastern Christianity: Those Christians not belonging to the Christian communities of the West; i.e., who are neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant. Historically, they trace their roots to the earliest Christian communities in the Holy Land and North Africa. The majority of Eastern Christians identify themselves as Eastern Orthodox Christians, who accept the decisions of the Œcumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) and maintain ties to the Patriarch of Constantinople. The members of the various non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, who reject the decisions of that Synod, are often called "Oriental Orthodox" Christians (which includes the Coptic Orthodox).

Elder (Gr., *Geron* or *Gerontas*): A monastic of wide spiritual experience or notable spiritual gifts who offers spiritual advice and guidance to other monastics. Often imprecisely translated as "old man."

Eldress: A female Elder.

Eucharist: The Body and Blood of Christ, imparted at the Divine Liturgy and in reserved form to the ill and those distant from a Church.

Fasting: Refraining from any food or drink, in some cases, or, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, as well as Lenten periods before Pascha (the proper Eastern Christian term for Easter), the Nativity Feast (Christmas), and other Great Feasts, from meat and dairy products and, in most instances, from fish, wine, and oil, too. Though Eastern Christian monastics are normally vegetarians and refrain from eating meat at any time, their fasting practices are also followed by the lay faithful, except for the Monday fast, which is primarily

monastic.

Gathering (*Synaxis*): A meeting in which monastics and monastic Elders gather for spiritual instructions or discussions. Also often used to refer to common Church services, including the Divine Liturgy.

Hesychasm: Derived from the Greek word for "silence," the word "Hesychasm" refers to an ancient form of inner prayer, practiced widely by the desert Fathers. It centers particularly on the recitation of the "Jesus Prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," in its most common form), in conjunction with concentration on the heart (hence, the "Jesus Prayer" is also called the "Prayer of the Heart") and certain ascetic and physical disciplines, as well as the control of breathing, whereby one comes, through the purification of the senses, to a vision of Divine light, or the uncreated Energies of God. This inner cleansing and consequent transformation, in which the mind and the heart find union in Grace, lead to man's deification (*theosis*)—even, to some extent, in this life—by union with the Energies of God (though not with His Essence, which remains ineffable, unfathomable, and beyond man's ken). Enlightenment and divinization in Christ are the ultimate aims of Hesychasm and define, for the Orthodox Christian, human salvation. The writings in *The Evergetinos* describe the struggle for *theosis* in the ancient desert. Hesychastic principles and teachings are also found in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrios of Pontos, St. Diadochos of Photike, St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory of Sinai, and St. Nicephoros of Mt. Athos, and those of many other Church Fathers. St. Gregory Palamas, in the fourteenth century, is credited with setting forth this ancient tradition in its fullest form in his lofty apologetic discourses. A collection of writings on Hesychasm—a companion volume, of sorts, to *The Evergetinos*—was compiled by St. Makarios of Corinth and St. Nikodemos and published in Venice, in 1782, as *The Philokalia*. An English translation of this classic of Orthodox spirituality is still in progress; four of the five volumes of the work have been published to date.

Hesychast: One who practices Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

Hesychasterion: A hermitage or a monastic institution dedicated to the practice of Hesychasm. (See "Hesychasm.")

Hierarch: A Bishop of any rank.

Hierodeacon, Hieromonk: A monastic Deacon or Presbyter, respectively. (See "Priest.")

Liturgy: In Eastern Christianity, the Eucharistic service; usually, "Divine Liturgy." Often wrongly called the "Mass," a term unknown in Eastern Christian tradition.

Metropolitan: The Bishop of a very large or important diocese with the dis-

tinction of being a Metropolia; a Bishop with this honorary title (usually the President, or chief Hierarch, of a Synod of Bishops). (See "Bishop.")

Monastery: A community of monks. (See "*Cœnobion*" and "Skete.")

Mystery (*Mysterion*): The proper term, in Eastern Christian nomenclature, for a "Sacrament." While the latter term is used widely by English-speaking Orthodox, it conveys what in Western Christianity is a concept less broad and encompassing than that designated by the word "Mystery." In Eastern Christianity, almost any act which conveys Grace is considered a Mystery, without specifying seven particular "Sacraments" (though this idea was imported into Eastern Christianity from the West, both by imitation and in responding to Western Christian theological thought). Nor, in the East, is a distinction made, as in the West, between the acts and ordinances established by Christ Himself and so-called *sacramentalia*, or Grace that is bestowed *ex opere operato* and Grace bestowed *quasi ex opere operato*.

Novice: One who is being tested for the monastic Tonsure, normally for a period of three years. (See "Tonsure.")

Œcumenical Synod: A gathering of the Bishops of all of the local and national Orthodox Churches for the purpose of making administrative decisions or defending traditional Orthodox doctrine. The decisions of such Synods, when accepted by the entire Church (seven, and sometimes eight, Synods are considered œcumenical in the Eastern Orthodox Church), are absolutely binding on the Church. All subsequent Councils and Synods must conform to the doctrinal statements of the Œcumenical Synods, which are sometimes referred to as "Œcumenical Councils." (See "Council.")

Orthodox Christianity: See "Eastern Christianity."

Patriarch: Bishop of a local, national, or regional Church of great historical importance or extensive geographical territory. The Western term "Pope" is synonymous with "Patriarch." (See "Bishop.")

Priest: A clergyman ordained by a Bishop to serve a monastic community or a parish. The members of the Priesthood are, in ascending rank, Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop. All three ranks belong to the Priesthood, though the Presbyter is most often referred to singly by the term "Priest." In the Eastern Church, Deacons and Presbyters may be married or unmarried, though all Bishops are celibate. There are also lower ranks of clergy that are often associated with the Priesthood, including Subdeacons and Readers (Chanters). (See "Bishop" and "Hierodeacon, Hieromonk.")

Schema: This term, from the Greek word for "form," "plan," or "design," is used in the early centuries of monasticism to describe the monastic habit in general (*schema*). There is also a specific garment, the *Analabos*, often called the "*Schema*" or the "Great *Schema*," which is worn by Eastern Christian monastics of the

highest grade, who are called "Schema-monks" or "Schema-nuns." (There are three monastic grades: that of Rasophore, that of the Small *Schema*, and that of the Great *Schema*, though, according to some authorities, monastics of the Small *Schema* and the Great *Schema* properly belong to a single rank.) The *Schema* is draped over the shoulders, hanging down the back, just below the neck, and down the front of the body, as well. It is emblazoned, on the front, with a Cross, the instruments of the Crucifixion, and various letters that refer to Christ and the spiritual powers available to the monk or nun in his or her spiritual struggles. The front part of the Great *Schema* covers the torso, while the front portion of the Small *Schema* is much shorter and covers the thorax.

Skete: A small community of monastic hermits, normally comprised of private hermitages (huts or cells) and a Church or Chapel for common worship.

Sketis (Wadi el Natrun, Wadi el-Natrun, Wadi al Natrun, Wadi al-Natrun): A valley in the southern part of the Nitrian Desert in Egypt, to the west of the mouths of the Nile River. In the fourth and fifth centuries, especially, but even as late as the seventh century, hundreds of monasteries flourished in Sketis. The name comes from the Greek for "ascetic" and refers to the immense number of ascetic monastics (hundreds of thousands, according to some authorities) who inhabited the area. The term is often loosely, if somewhat inaccurately, used to refer inclusively to what were actually distinct and specific monastic communities in the Nitrian Desert. With the Moslem conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D., the monastic communities of Sketis were destroyed. (See "Skete.")

Spiritual Father: In the case of a Priest, a Confessor; in the case of a monk, a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

Spiritual Mother: A nun who is a spiritual advisor. (See "Confession.")

Superior: An Abbot or Abbess or someone in charge of a monastic community or a ranking clergyman in a parish.

Synod: A term often used to refer to a formal meeting of the Hierarchs of a Synod of Bishops.

Synod of Bishops: In the Eastern Church, a council of Bishops who administer a local or national Church body, the senior member of which acts as its President; the basic organ of administrative conciliarity in the Eastern Church.

Tonsure: The cutting of the hair, by which a novice is formally accepted into monastic ranks. This monastic custom developed in the fourth century and was, contrary to the claims of some authorities, not universally followed in the Egyptian desert, where acceptance into the monastic estate was often very informal.

* This list is not meant to be exhaustive. It essays simply to give the reader some familiarity with Eastern Christian nomenclature, which is often inconsistent and influenced by extraneous traditions. We have also avoided, here, reiterating definitions found in the text or in endnotes, except when further elaboration seemed appropriate.

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